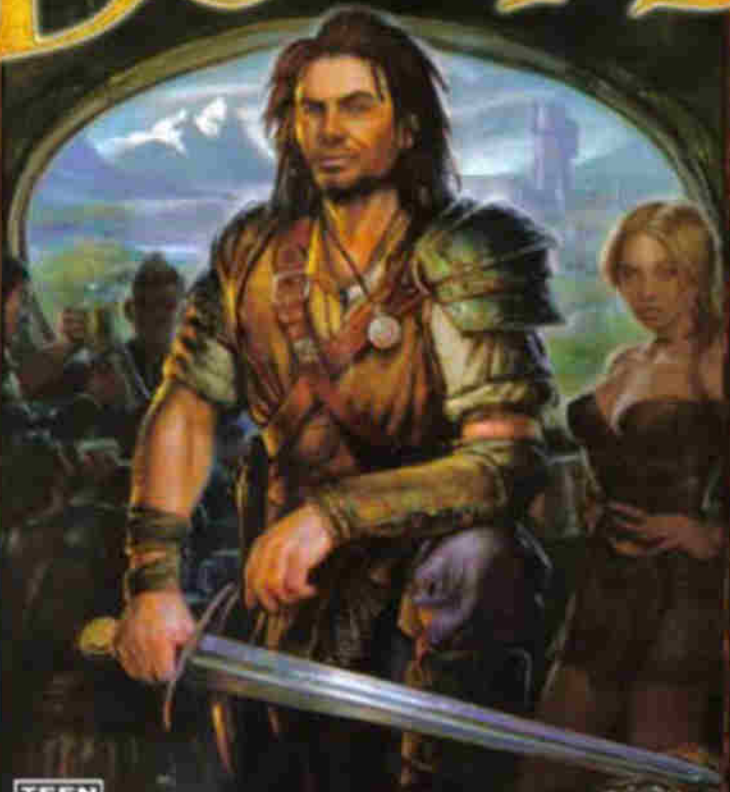


XBOX



# The BARD'S TALE



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# introduction

The Bard was born to a working class family in a small country village one year after the new millennium had turned. His parents, Edmund and Adelaide had married two years earlier, while Edmund was suffering from an ailment that was spreading throughout the globe like a plague. Many believed this "plague" was the means to the end of the world because of the new millennium approaching, but as it turns out, everyone just had a touch of the flu. Later doctors would refer to this flu as The Millennium Virus. The Bard was a good



2 ■ baby, but had an unusual infatuation with rattles. Because of this, he developed quite the knack of conning other babies out of their rattles. "It was amazing," his mother would say, "Every week he would have upwards of twenty rattles in his possession." He spent his formative years attending school and working on his parents grub farm, neither of which seemed to inspire him, although it did inspire townsfolk to stay downwind. A turning point in the Bard's life was his first exposure to live music at age 12. While on an errand to fetch a bucket of lard for the week's meals, he was lured to the town pub by the melodic sounds of plucked strings. He watched wide-eyed through the pub window for a good hour before a barmaid yelled, "Get away from my dressing room window, boy!" He then moved down to the window the music was coming from and listened with rapt attention while the band played to an appreciative audience. Periodically patrons would toss coins into a worn hat at the foot of the stage and the Bard couldn't help but notice that the lute player's hands were actually clean, unlike his which were the color of grub excre-

ment. That alone was incentive enough for the Bard to become a musician. As the band stopped playing to enjoy a round of ale the Bard's eyes locked on the beautiful Isabel, the daughter of a nearby farmer, who was now the bar's serving wench. It was at this very moment the Bard understood his true calling, prompting him to run back to the window of the barmaid's dressing room. The very next day a black-eyed Bard rummaged through some wood scraps and constructed a crude, one-stringed instrument and learned to play the big hit of the time, It's Bad Luck To Be You. To earn money and to gain a musical education, he performed odd jobs at the pub, such as killing rats in the cellar (or the barmaid's dressing room), and made friends with the traveling musicians who filled its stage.

Near the conclusion of his schooling the Bard felt he had no choice but to leave school and his village. This was of course because the school and the village asked him to leave. It seems the Bard had made a pass at every lassie in town and actually was in the process of starting the second pass. Also, his past caught up with him when classmates in his Warlocks & Witches class (the first year the class went co-ed) conjured up a spell to release blocked childhood memories. One by one, many of the Bard's classmates began remembering being conned out of their rattles when they were small children. The Bard barely escaped with his own rattles that day.

On the outside the Bard's parents were bitterly disappointed in their son, but deep down, well... they were bitterly disappointed in their son. "I don't know what is worse," his father complained, "that he is so incompetent that he can't even take over the family grub farm or the sounds that come out of that blasted lute of his!" His first journey took him to a neighboring village where he became an apprentice to a barrel maker, enabling him to earn some money to pursue his music career at night. While making barrels his mind drifted off to thoughts of music making and women, or was that music and woman-making? At any rate, this lack of focus at work resulted in some shoddy barrel making which would soon come back to haunt him. His nights were filled with visits to the town pub, plying his preferred trade of music for a flagon of ale and hopefully the favor of any lasses who might be within earshot.

His tenure as a barrel maker came to an abrupt end when his barrel mentor Henry, the proprietor of The Barrel Barn, ran him out of town for producing barrels that shattered with a mere whack of a sword. "A key won't even be safe in these things!" Henry screamed while chasing the Bard down the street with sword drawn. Out of money and out of women, the Bard officially entered his career as a roaming musician and adventurer by wandering the land, every day looking for a way to secure a bed and a plate of food. His progress took him northward hoping to find new pawns in new towns, those unfamiliar with

his trickery of separating them from their silver. With all the Bard's wits and all the Bard's talents, he was able to get by. He couldn't eat, and had to sleep on the ground, but he got by. Just when he was about to give up and head back to the grub farm, fate stepped in... or actually kind of slithered in.

During an extermination session, to the Bard's amazement, a rat spoke to him in an elegant English tongue and pleaded for his life. He wasn't really amazed that the rat was speaking to him, but that it was speaking to him after only two mugs of ale. The rat eloquently told his story - he had been a talented bard himself once, a refined gentleman actually and a bit of a gold-digger, when one of his conquests, a disgruntled mistress, turned out to be a sorceress. She exacted her revenge by relegating him to a life as a rat - a permanent reminder of his true nature. After the Bard heard this, he only had one question. "Her name wasn't Sheila, was it?" After being relieved his nights previous conquest wasn't the same woman, he then questioned the speaking rat as to why he should spare his life. The rat explained that he could teach the Bard a tune that when played would magically summon him out of midair, a talent he once had when in human form. He went on to explain that only the most talented musicians can work such magic, and he had witnessed the Bard's talented play. "Who knows," he said to the Bard, "you may be able to use me as a ruse to earn a few coins." With the thought of riches rushing to the Bard's head, a beautiful partnership was born; the rat... and of course the little rodent creature. The Bard had one simple request of his new friend the talkative rat; speak again, and he'd die before he could finish the sentence. "I agree..." responded the rat.

The Bard continued his trek through the countryside, using his now silent rat to disturb patrons at local taverns and pubs and subsequently dissipating him for a modest reward. Searching for new towns to ply his trade took the Bard across the sea northward to the Orcades Islands, a mystical land storied for its unusual creatures and potent brew. After touring several settlements the Bard found himself in the village of Houton, outside the local watering hole The Drunken Rat, and that is where our story begins.

## the Bard's Tale controller



**Left thumbstick:**

**Directional pad:**

**Right thumbstick:**

**Left trigger:**

**Right trigger:**

**White button:**

**Black button:**

**A button**

**B button**

**X button**

**Y button**

**START**

**BACK**

Move Bard

Group Commands

Camera control - Press: Toggle map

Open Artifact Selection Menu

Open Tune Selection Menu

Select Melee Weapon

Select Ranged/Alternate Melee Weapons

Tap: Attack - Hold: Alt Attack

Defend

Jump

Use

Pause game/ Game menu

Character Sheet



# getting started

## Main Menu

On the opening menu you will be presented with five options:

**Start New Game** — Select this option when you are ready to begin playing. Once you have started a new game, you have the option to select the game difficulty: Easy, Normal, or Olde School. **Easy** is what the Bard himself would choose, for it's the easiest way out. Choose **Olde School** if you wish to see the Bard get the beating he deserves, but keep in mind there will be far less save points in the game. Or, if you are neither wimp nor stallion, choose **Normal**.

Once you have chosen a difficulty level, you will be taken to the Character Generation Screen. Here, you may set the Bards' attributes to your liking, or select "Auto Allocate" to have the game choose them for you.

**Generate Character:** Depending on the difficulty level, the Bard's starting attributes will vary. Attributes are as follows:

**Strength** - The stronger the Bard is, the more damage he can inflict in melee combat.

**Vitality** - A high vitality will improve the Bards' health, making him more difficult to defeat in battle.

**Luck** - Luck has a subtle affect on many aspects of the Bards' adventures.

**Dexterity** - A high dexterity allows the Bard to inflict greater damage with ranged weapons.

**Charisma** - Shopkeepers will offer significant discounts to the Bard if he has high charisma.

**Rhythm** - Rhythm allows the Bard to play magical tunes with greater skill, enhancing the abilities and strengths of summoned creatures.

Once you select attribute levels, scroll down to "CONTINUE" and press "A". You will be asked to choose a talent.

**Talent:** This is simply a talent the Bard will have from the beginning of the game. The Bard will pick up more talents as the game progresses utilizing "power ups" you earn by winning battles.

**Two-handed Weapons** - Allows the Bard to equip and use Two-Handed weapons.

**Dual Wield** - Allows the Bard to fight with a dirk in one hand and a sword in the other.

**Flail** - Allows the Bard to equip and use a flail.

**Shield Bash** - The Bard will automatically bash with his shield after blocking, stunning his enemy.

**Riposte** - The bard will counterattack in a circle after blocking, knocking down his enemies. Used with the Dual Wield skill.

**Heavy Parry** - The bard will counterattack in a circle after blocking, knocking down his enemies. Used with the Two-Handed Weapon skill.

**Shield Charge** - A powerful charging attack which stuns enemies. Used with the sword skill. Hold and release the **attack** button to activate.

**Blade Dash** - A deadly charging attack, used with the dual wield skill. Hold and release the **attack** button to activate.

**Spinning Smash** - A damaging spinning attack, used with the two-handed weapon skill. Hold and release the **attack** button to activate.

**Whirlwind** - A powerful spinning attack which stuns enemies. Used with the Flail skill. Hold and release the **attack** button to activate.

**Power Shot** - A powerful ranged shot which passes through its target. Used with the Ranged skill. Hold and release the **attack** button to activate.

**Arrow Storm** - A ranged attack that fires multiple arrows which pass through their targets, used with the ranged skill. Hold and release the **attack** button to activate.

**Critical Strike** - Gives the Bard a chance to score a critical hit on his enemies, inflicting additional damage.

**Improved Critical Strike** - An improved chance to score a more deadly critical hit.

**Treasure Hunter** - The Bard gains bonus coins for any treasure he finds.

Once you've selected the Bard's initial talent, the game will begin.

**Load Saved Game** — This option will allow you to load a previously saved Bard's Tale game from your memory card.

**Options** — Select this option if you want to change controller configuration, adjust sound options, or various other options in the game.

**Help** — Select this to display the game's controller configuration.

**Extras** — On the main menu is a selection containing extras. We aren't saying exactly what they are or how to unlock them, but if you care to make a donation, you can see some fun behind-the-scenes material.

**Credits** — Select this to see the band of reprobates who brought you The Bard's Tale. Names may have been changed for their own safety.

# playing the game

Any cut scene or movie can be skipped by **pressing START**. To walk the Bard around, use the left thumbstick. The right thumbstick will rotate the camera. The Bard can speak with certain characters by walking up to them, and in many cases, the Bard can choose how to respond.

## *Snarky or Nice*

There are several opportunities throughout the game where the Bard can respond to someone he is speaking with. The player has two options, answer nicely or talk smack (snarky). Whichever one you choose can change the outcome of the conversation, and nice is not always the way to go. When these opportunities to reply arise, two icons will appear. Press "**B**" for a nice response and "**X**" for a snarky one.

## *Character Sheet*

During the game the player can press **BACK** at any time to bring up the character sheet. It allows the player to view level, health, mana, experience, as well as all the Bard's current attributes. It also displays the following:

### **Quest Log**

This lists your current tasks.

### **Equipment**

This is where you can view which weapons, armor, and shields the Bard is carrying.

### **Tune List**

Brings up a list of tunes, showing the creatures the Bard can summon to fight at his side.

### **Talent List**

This displays all the talents the Bard has learned so far in the game.

### **Token List**

Displays a spot for each of the 25 tokens in the game and shows which tokens the Bard has found.

## *Making money*

The Bard can collect money by killing enemies, be they human or beast, and by collecting valuables they might be carrying. There may even be a few buried treasures here and there to fill the Bard's pockets. This money is very important to upgrade weapons and armor, as well as buying the Bard out of precarious situations.

# selecting and using weapons

To select a weapon, press **the White button** to bring up your options. Choose your weapon by pressing the appropriate button. Weapons that are grayed out are not available at that given time. Be sure to stop by the stores in town to upgrade the bard's weaponry.

## *Available Weapons, Shields and Armor*

The Bard begins his quest with a simple sword and some modest armor. As the game progresses the Bard can upgrade his weapons and defenses through either exploration or by going to village stores. To buy, the Bard obviously needs money, which he can make by either completing certain quests or killing creatures and foes. Following are the types of weapons, armor, and shields available throughout the game. Keep in mind that every item available has different levels of quality and effectiveness.



### *Dirks*

Not much for combat, but at least it's better than bruising up your knuckles. It is however a good weapon to use for dual weapon fighting, with a sword for instance, giving the Bard an extra edge.



### *Swords*

Now we are getting a little more serious. There are several swords available as the game progresses, with upgrades requiring fewer blows to take down an enemy.



### *Two-Handed Weapons*

These are weapons designed to utilize both hands, making them a double threat upon the enemy.



### *Flails*

For those of you unfamiliar with medieval combat, a flail is one of those pointy steel balls on a chain attached to a stick. Quite fun actually once you get it twirling.





### *Bows*

This allows the Bard to do his fighting from a safer distance. Available in several sizes and strengths, the bigger the bow, the sooner they fall.



### *Armor*

As we mentioned, the Bard begins the game with some pretty flimsy armor. However, as the foes get bigger and the battles get more intense, the Bard best find some stronger armor to keep him alive.



### *Shields*

Shields are also very important when it comes to keeping the Bards' blood where it belongs... inside his body. Shields can be upgraded, and when used along with some quality armor can keep the Bard in battle longer.

## *Health and Healing*

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The Bard can heal in several ways. He will heal naturally given time between battles to lick his wounds. Also, when the Bard visits a Kirk in the game he is asked if he wishes to make a donation. The Bard may donate any amount of money to a kirk receiving free healing as well as a short-duration blessing giving the Bard an extra resistance to damage. A more effective way for the Bard to heal is through summoning creatures with healing powers, when they are available.

## *Artifacts*

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There are artifacts in the game that the Bard may use to invoke great power. The first of these artifacts is the amulet of a sorceress which the Bard receives near the beginning of the game. As the game goes on, even more powerful artifacts can be employed by the Bard. The Artifacts allow the Bard to summon the spirit of the character they are attuned to, unleashing their power on his foes.

To power an artifact the Bard must collect Adder Stones. The total number of stones that he has will be displayed on screen whenever he uses one or col-

lects one. The Bard may also consult his character sheet for the total number of stones he possesses.

To activate the Artifact, **pull the left trigger** which will bring up a menu displaying which artifacts are available. Once the appropriate button is pressed, a second menu appears where you can select the number of stones you wish to use. Once selected, the Bard will activate the artifact.

### *Sorceress*

**Power Level I (1 Stone)** – Sorceress heals all members of the Bard's party.

**Power Level II (2 Stones)** – Sorceress blesses all members of the Bard's Party giving them a 50% decrease in all damage taken for a short period of time.

**Power Level III (3 Stones)** – Sorceress blesses all members so they are invulnerable for a short period of time.

### *Tokens*

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Tokens are items that can be found throughout the game that add a bonus to the Bard's attributes. Each token can increase a certain attribute, such as luck, dexterity, charisma, and so on. There are 25 tokens in the game, 20 enhance the Bards' basic statistics and 5 are a bit rarer having more powerful effects. The Bard can see which tokens he has or hasn't found by accessing the token page from his character sheet.

### *Shopkeepers*

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As you wander through towns, keep an eye out for the town stores. Inside these stores you can speak with shopkeepers about the weaponry they have for sale. The shopkeeper will give descriptions and show the prices, and you may purchase these weapons. Always be on the lookout for upgrades, the better prepared for battle the Bard is, the more likely he is to live through it.

# summoning and controlling creatures

As the Bard goes through the game, he will learn or be taught new tunes to play and collect new instruments which will summon creatures to help him during battle. Each one of these creatures has specific talents as well as weaknesses, so selecting the right companions in different situations can make the difference between victory and defeat. Also, each summoned creature has the ability to be upgraded to a more powerful level as the game goes on. These upgrades can range from new abilities to statistical upgrades.

By **pulling and holding the right trigger**, the Bard has a choice of four categories: Support, elemental, helpers, and warriors. Select the category by pressing the appropriate button, and then choose the creature you wish to summon. If the icon is grayed out, or a question mark is displayed, then that creature is not currently available. The Bard will play a tune and that creature will appear to help the Bard. The creature can be killed, and if so, the Bard will have to summon the creature again.

Each instrument the Bard owns has a pool of magical power known as mana. Whenever the Bard plays a tune the mana cost of that tune will be subtracted from the mana pool of the instrument, so use it sparingly. Mana will regenerate to a certain extent over time, the rate of regeneration depending on the level of the Bard.

**Giving orders:** During the game the Bard can issue group orders to the creatures he summons by using the directional pad. An order will apply to all currently summoned creatures, so individual orders cannot be given.

## Come To me (right directional)

All creatures will go to the Bard, ignoring attackers and trying to get close to him. When they have gotten close enough to the Bard, they will act as if in defensive stance.

## Defensive Stance (down directional)

The creature will stay near the Bard, attacking any enemies that come in range. They will not chase enemies that are too far away.

## Aggressive Stance (up directional)

The creature will attack the closest enemy until it is dead, then repeat. They will chase enemies a fair distance away from the Bard but will not wander too far away.

## Stay (left directional)

The creatures will all stay where they are, defending themselves if able.

# Summon Creatures



## Rat

**Description:** A typical large brown sewer rat.

**Ability:** This is just your typical rat that can do no more than frighten the occasional maiden.



## Mercenary

**Description:** The Mercenary is a rough and tumble fighter who travels around the world selling his sword to the highest bidder. Typical of his sort; crude, rude and very handy to have around in a fight.

**Ability:** Workmanlike in his fighting he makes up for any lack of style with effectiveness, he uses his long experience in combat to gain every advantage he can, knocking enemies to the ground with special combat maneuvers.



## Knight

**Description:** The Knight is a massive warrior clad in heavy plate armor and wielding a huge sword. The Knight is chivalrous and courteous in all things including battle.

**Ability:** Although slow, the knight can absorb massive amounts of damage while using his shield to stun his enemies.



## Gouger

**Description:** The Gouger is a large bloated insect like monster.

**Ability:** The Gouger drains life from its enemies and then uses that energy to heal its allies.



## Heroine

**Description:** The Heroine is a warrior of great skill. She is quick on her feet and wields her crossbow with deadly accuracy. Always eager for battle the Heroine is quick of wit and full of spirit.

**Ability:** The Heroine fires a burst of crossbow bolts at her foes.



## Brute

**Description:** The Giant is a large dumb but good natured brute. In combat he hurls large rocks at his enemies.

**Ability:** The rocks that the Giant throws hit hard enough to stun any creature directly struck for a significant amount of time.



### *Elemental*

**Description:** A bipedal being composed of flame the fire elemental hurls parts of his body at his foes.

**Ability:** The Elemental throws balls of fire, burning foes in an area.



### *Behemoth*

**Description:** The Behemoth is a large fiery behemoth capable of trampling its foes even as it burns them alive.

**Ability:** The Behemoth charges in combat, causing a damaging explosion when it hits. When in close quarters it uses its fiery breath to char its enemies.



### *Thunder Spider*

**Description:** The Thunder Spider is a being composed of pure electrical energy. In combat it attacks its foes delivering a bite that both shocks and stuns.

**Ability:** The electrical attack of the spider stuns enemies for a short period of time.



### *Knocker*

**Description:** A small humanoid of sorts he runs into battle with a quiver full of lightning rods. Going where the fight is thickest he jams these rods into the ground and then runs for it before the rod is activated.

**Ability:** The Knocker uses charged lightning rods to attack multiple enemies at a time.



### *Crone*

**Description:** The Crone is a large disgusting woman covered in tattoos and dirt. Despite her appearance she is skilled in the magical art of healing.

**Ability:** The Crone will heal injured allies in combat.



### *Enchantress*

**Description:** The Enchantress is a magical being with the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a snake. She flies around on butterfly wings.

**Ability:** The Enchantress uses her mystical powers to reverse time, bringing allies back from the dead.



### *Bodyguard*

**Description:** A large man wearing a full helm and carrying a tiny shield, the Bodyguard is the most loyal of the Bard's servants. He has a high pitched squeaky voice unusual for somebody so large. He is very enthusiastic about his work and very good natured.

**Ability:** The Bodyguard taunts ranged foes in combat, causing them to attack him instead of his allies.



### *Rogue*

**Description:** The Rogue is a dangerously beautiful woman who lures enemies to her with honeyed words and body language only to speed away, slicing them with her knives as she tumbles or vaults past. Her upgraded form uses poisoned daggers.

**Ability:** The Rogue taunts melee foes in combat, causing them to attack her as she evades them and counters with her daggers.



### *Light Fairy*

**Description:** The light fairy is a small fairy like flying creature.

**Ability:** The light fairy can light darkened rooms so the Bard can see as well as stun enemies in combat with flashes of light.



### *Explorer*

**Description:** The Explorer is an old retired explorer. He wanders around the battlefield picking up treasure and stumbling into traps.

**Ability:** The Explorer will peer about an area cautiously looking for traps. He will also open chests and grab loot for the Bard plus he can uncover secret doors.



Throughout the game, the Bard will encounter several different characters, and they are not all human. They are, but not limited to, the following:



### *Kunal Trow*

Kunal Trow are smallish green humanoids with large ears, a stooped frame, pointy heads, and a mouthful of sharp teeth. They are very nasty and vicious by nature, feeling the only good human is a dead human.



### *Peerie Trow*

Although related to Kunal Trow, Peerie Trow are not as hideous looking, and not nearly as cruel. They have a penchant for mischief and delight in playing games and tricking others. They'll trick you, but aren't likely to kill you.



### *Finfoolk*

Half man, half octopus, these creatures live in the water. However, they can survive out of the water for short periods of time, so beware. They are also reputed to have the ability to use magic.



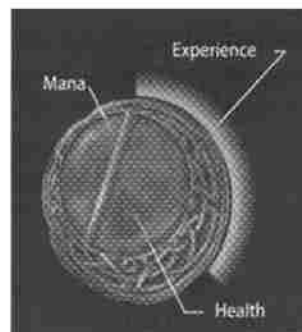
### *Firbolgs*

Firbolgs are creatures that are built for digging. Long muscular arms, not too bright, and they actually enjoy digging for countless hours in the mines.



### *Vikings*

These Vikings are, well, Vikings. Fighters who love to spend their days pillaging villages and drinking their beer. You would never find a Viking at a high society party, unless of course they were pillaging it.



### *Bard Health Display*

In the Upper left corner of the screen is a small graphical display of the Bards' current health and mana. As the Bard gains greater maximum health and mana the displays change visibly to reflect these increases.

### *Hotkey menus*

Whenever the player presses either trigger, or the black or white buttons, the appropriate hot menu will appear on the screen.

### *Summoned Health Display*

When the Bard has a summoned creature in his party an additional graphical display will appear on screen indicating the current health of the summoned creature.

### *Silver*

This shows the total amount of silver that the Bard is carrying. It only appears when the Bard gains silver. When a treasure item or loose silver is found it will fly up to a spot in the upper right corner of the screen and then transform into coins which then fall into a purse located in the lower right corner.

### *Adder Stones*

This displays the number of adder stones the Bard has available to him for conjuring up special spells.

### *Experience*

This shows the total amount of experience that the Bard has gained towards his next level.

### *Mini-Map*

In the options menu you can choose to turn on the mini-map. This small map will appear in the upper right-hand corner of the screen showing the layout of the land or building, and also where enemies are hanging out; Pressing the right analog stick will toggle between the mini-map, a larger map, or no map.

## World Map

When the Bard leaves a town, he will appear on a "world map" showing the different locations the Bard can travel to.

### Controls

The Bard is represented on the world map as an animating character that the player controls directly using the analog stick. The Bard can only journey on the world map and may not attack or play tunes. Players may access the inventory by **pressing BACK**.

### Locations

Each specific location that the Bard may enter is located on the world map. Whenever the Bard walks near one of these locations the player will receive a button prompt telling him the name of the location and asking him whether or not he wants to enter. He can then enter by pressing the **X** button.

### Random Encounters

When the Bard is traveling on the world map he may encounter a creature or group of creatures wandering around the map. If the Bard gets too close to one of them, he will be transported to an area to fight. The Bard must defeat all of the enemies before he can get back to the world map.

## Level Specific Counters, Timers, or Health Bars

The Bard will often find himself in situations where he will need to keep track of either a number, enemy health, or a certain amount of time. In these situations a custom graphic is created and displayed at the top of the screen.

## credits



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