

CHAPTER TWENTY

METROID

Type: Science fiction quest.

Objective: It's the year 2005, half a decade after a cosmic congress known as the Galactic Federation has been established. Peace and contentment reign-until space pirates steal the only known specimen of a Metroid, a life form newly discovered on the world SR388 . . . a creature believed to have wiped out all other life forms on that planet. Fearing that the pirates are going to cause the monster to multiply and send it against the worlds of the Federation, Federation Police dispatch space hunter Samus Aran, a powerful cyborg, to the pirates' planet, Zebes. There, Samus must penetrate the mazes inside the world, avoid monsters and pitfalls, collect various power sources, defeat the Mini-Bosses and Mother Brain, and destroy Metroids.

Layout: The planet's interior is a dark world of caverns and metallic corridors, floating platforms, fiery lava pits, and creatures that flit about or lie in wait. The 5 sections of the alien headquarters are Tourian, Brinstar, Norfair, Mini-Boss Hideout 1, and Mini-Boss Hideout 2.

Scroll: The Images move from side to side or up and down as Samus barrels his way through Zebes.

Hero's Powers: At the start, Samus has just a blaster and the ability to make powerful jumps. Along the way he collects the following weapons and/or power boosters: Maru Mari, which enables him to become a ball and roll through tight spots; the Long Beam, which boosts the range of his gun; Missiles, which pack far more firepower than his measly laser gun (there are 5 Missiles in each Missile site you capture); an Energy Tank, which allows Samus to store extra energy; Bombs; an Ice Beam, which freezes objects; a Wave Beam, which radiates in several directions at once; High Jump, winged boots that boost the cyborg's leaping capacity by 150 percent; the Screw Attack, a buzzsawlike attribute that allows Samus to spin and slash; and Varia, which diminishes by fifty percent any power loss Samus may suffer. Dead enemies can also provide power or Missile boosts (see About Your Enemies).

Hero's Weaknesses: Contact with anything but the walls, floors, and ceiling costs Samus power.

About Your Enemies: *Metroid* may well be the most thickly populated video game in history. The monsters are Mellows, Zebs, Zoomers, the Skree, Rios, Rippers, Wavers, Memus, Geegas, Zeelas, Side-Hoppers, Mellas, Nova (which are covered with fire-resistant wool!), Gamets, Ripper Iis (tougher than their cousins), Dragons, Violas, Multiviolas, Holtzes, and Dessgeegas. These enemies are insect- or batlike . . . flying, hopping, or slithering about the caverns. When these enemies die, they leave behind purple power balls or Missiles, which Samus can collect and add to his arsenal. These remain on the screen for 10 seconds before vanishing. There are also the Mini-Bosses Kraid and Ridley. Kraid fires Missiles from his belly, Ridley spits flame. And, of course, there's the awesome Mother Brain and the Metroids. The latter have the ability to latch on to Samus's body and quickly drain his power.

Menu: There is only the one quest, although you can choose which way you wish to send Samus.

Timer: None. The only way the game will end is when Samus runs out of juice.

Scoring: There is no scoring, only the collection of all-important power units. Samus starts with 30 units and can collect up to 99. With Energy Tanks he can add another 100 per Tank. Samus is permitted to collect just 6 Tanks. (The other item with a cap on it are the Missiles; you can have no more than 255 at any given time).

Patterns: The layout never changes, and the monsters are always located in the same places. A few, such as the Zoomers, move in straight lines, unaffected by your presence. Some, like the Rios, have it in for you personally and will attack.

Beginner's Strategy: To get under way, keep in mind that the Zoomers won't bother you if you don't bump into them, and that to avoid the Skree, simply become a ball (see below) and roll past them (contact with these enemies will cost you 8 power units; dead, the creatures leave behind purple orbs worth 5 power units). When you encounter Rios, jump up (over them, if they're low enough). When Samus jumps, Rios automatically rise; it's easy, then, to get under them and blast them to atoms (4 shots will do the trick). Don't forget that you can also shoot while you jump. This is especially useful when you're simultaneously leaping lava flows and trying to fight Wavers.

Before you do any serious Metroid hunting, you're going to have to roam the underground world to acquire power boosters. You should try to collect them in this order: Maru Mari, Missiles, the Long Beam, an Energy Tank, Bombs, the Ice Beam, more Missiles, another Energy Tank, and Varia [**Note that it's kind of hard to get the Varia without the High Jump Boots!**]. Gathering them in this sequence will give you the firepower you need to negotiate the tunnels and passageways. Naturally, you would be wise to sketch out a map as you move through the maze. (Remember, too, that bombs aren't just for killing, but can also blow holes in walls and floors so that you can make your own doors; and that not only does the Ice Beam paralyze creatures like the Rippers, which cannot be killed, but it can also freeze enemy rays, such as Ridley's fireballs. You can then use these enemy icicles as stepladders, if you wish.) The Maru Mari is almost immediately to your left. After you get it, head right until you reach a vertical blue passage. Ascend to the door on the right, go through, and drop down the vertical gold passage. At the bottom, head right to the Missiles. Backtrack up the gold passage, go left through the door, back to the blue passage, head up, and at the top left to obtain the Long Beam. Then it's back again to the gold passage. This time, however, you'll be crossing it horizontally to reach the door on the other side. Go through and continue along the passage, to the right, until you reach the Energy Tank. Get it, then keep going right, where you'll come to another gold passage. Climb, go through the door on the left, and press onward until you reach the Bombs. At this point return to where you found the Energy Tank. Continue to the left and go through the door. There, descend to the gold passage, head left, and continue until you get the Ice Beam. Back-track all the way to the gold passage you entered when gameplay began (on the left), ascend, enter the top door on the right, continue right to more Missiles and another Energy Tank, then double back. You'll pass under one set of bricks, then another. When you reach the second set, fire *up* and blast a hole into the level above you. (Note: when you shoot through bricks, you have to jump up through the hole and jockey to the left or right . . . or you'll fall right back down. However, if you have trouble doing this, just keep jumping straight up; eventually the bricks repair themselves and will close beneath you.) Once you're up, move to the left and collect Varia. You're now armed to the teeth. As for the other weapons, the High Jump is located in Norfair. Head to the vertical purple passage to the far right, enter the sixth door down from the top, and head left. The Wave Beam is also in Norfair, in the second tunnel from the bottom, halfway between the vertical center of Norfair and the far-left side. The Screw Attack can be found in Norfair on the far left side of the sixth tunnel from the bottom. In all, there are 19 spots to find Missiles, 6 to find Energy Tanks, and 2 to find Ice Beams.

After you've obtained all of the armaments, head to Brinstar for a showdown with Kraid. Make sure you write down the code that will appear when and if Samus dies; if you punch it into the game when you start over, you'll begin where you left off. Finally, be aware that while it only takes a few blaster shots to get through a blue door, 5 missiles are required to shoot through a red

door.

Advanced Strategy: Once you know the layout of Zebes, the key strategies are defeating the tougher enemies. The best way to fight Metroids is to use the Ice Beam to paralyze them, then kill them with 5 Missiles. If a Metroid grabs you, the best thing to do is to become a ball and leave Bombs. Another problem is getting into Tourian. Actually, there are two shortcuts. After you've beaten the Mini-Bosses, all you have to do is find the pair of statues in Brinstar (top level, far-left side of the tunnel) and hit them with a laser blast. They will grow and allow you to climb to Tourian. The second shortcut: there's a Rio in the chamber adjoining that of the statues. Lure it just below the statue platform, freeze it, and leap onto its head. Become a ball, drop a bomb, and hop off as the monster explodes. There's a door to the left; go through it and you're in Tourian. It's also possible to boost your gunfire at any point by depressing the B button and the Select button at the same time, and to make a high jump without High Jump by becoming a ball, dropping a bomb, hitting the A button to become full-sized again, and being blasted into the air. As soon as you're launched, do a jump and you'll really go flying. Another neat trick is being able to climb up sheer walls over doors. Open a door, move into the frame, and let the door shut on you. Simultaneously hold down the A button and quickly tap on the control button. You'll hop right up the wall. (To do this with NES Advantage: depress the A button and turn up the Turbo.)

As for Ridley, a quick way to get rid of the fiend is to note which way he's unleashing fireballs. If they're going up, then down, use your ice to freeze them, then hop onto the flaming projectiles and blast Ridley using missiles. If the fireballs are angling down and away, position yourself as close as you can to the platform on which he's standing and blow him away. Another tactic that works against Ridley is to go into the chamber and position yourself over the rock that's under the blue gate. Open the gate by shooting it, then jump in as it begins to shut. Not only will Samus be protected from Ridley, but he can use Missiles to end the Mini-Boss's murderous career.

Par: Not applicable. [Note: Par is short for 'par for the course' and is based on high-scores for games and therefore not applicable to *Metroid*. For applicable games, the author lists suggested scores you should have at particular points in the game and the ultimate high-score.]

NES Advantage: The Advantage allows your basic gun unit to fire more rapidly. Otherwise, it isn't a dramatic improvement.

Training Tips: Apart from your shooting skills—which you can polish by staying near the starting point and plugging Zoomers, Rios, and the Skree – you'll need to become proficient at jumping up and down in the vertical passages. Practice this by clearing a passageway of monsters and then just hopping from ledge to ledge. For descents, you should be skimming the ends of ledges as you drop, barely landing on each.

Rating: This game is truly an adventure. There's a lot to discover, a lot to shoot, and a lot that tries to terminate *you*.

Challenge: A

Graphics: B (The scenery is stark, but the animation is nifty.)

Sound Effects: B