

Past Present: A 3D Role Playing Game to Teach Social History

Bert Snow, Muzzy Lane Software, Inc., 260 Merrimac St. Newburyport, MA 01950,
bert@muzzylane.com,

Louis Alvarez, Andrew Kolker, Peter Odabashian, Center for New American Media,
222 West 37th St., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10018-6606

Email: louis@cnam.com, andy@cnam.com, peter@cnam.com

Experience History from the Inside Out...

Past/Present is an irreverent, surprising, and fresh approach to teaching social history to secondary schoolers created by the Center for New American Media and Muzzy Lane Software, Inc. *Past/Present* is an immersive digital video game where players live the lives of Americans from eras past. Imagine a learning experience where students are thrust into the everyday hustle and bustle of a century or two ago. They might find themselves enslaved in an antebellum town, or caught up in a strike in a Massachusetts textile mill, or riding the rails in the Depression. Students will need to have all their wits about them to survive in these unfamiliar environments.

This excitement is at the heart of *Past/Present*, a suite of immersive 3D first-person computer games (formerly known as *American Dynasties*) that conveys the vibrancy of American history to secondary-school students. Each game portrays an important moment in U.S. history—such as the fight against slavery in 1855, the riots around the Stamp Act in 1765, or New England labor unrest of the early 1900s—and allows players to assume the roles of a diverse cast of characters, each representing someone from a different economic, racial or ethnic background living at that time.

The now completed first *Past/Present* Game Era, is an exciting adventure set in 1906 in the fictional New England mill town of Eureka Falls. Players will have a choice of playing one of two avatars: Anna Caruso, a young Italian-American weaver who works at the Boylston Mills and has to decide where she stands when labor conflict comes to town, and Walter Armbruster, a young manager in the same mill who has to decide the best way to handle the labor disruption and keep the mill running.

In each role, players face challenges and decisions that their character might have faced, and see the consequences. As they journey through a day in their character's life, players will face difficult choices, moments of joy and sadness, exciting adventures, and plenty of colorful incidental characters to keep them company

Past/Present is tightly aligned with secondary school state and national history standards and has been developed with support from a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Luisa: Oh, let's read the funny papers! It's only one more penny, Anna.



- Okay, I'll buy it...
- I don't think so...

16:25

Value:	Pay/pt	Yards	Earned	Hours	Cost	Defects	Penalty	Total	Net Pay	TOTAL PAY
Cotton duck	\$0.36	0	\$0.00	1	\$0.10	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$-0.05	\$1.02
Peelin	\$0.72	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Fancy Twist	\$1.08	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	