Children's TECHNOLOGY Review

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Apps
That Tell Stories

The Barefoot Atlas

Notes from the First BolognaRagazzi Digital Prize (p. 6)

Watch a video of this cover, at http://youtu.be/QJuqwsX0rWcs

Children's Technology Review

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Donotes an "Editor's Choice" product.

It's been a busy month in children's interactive media...

...so let me quickly bring you up to date.

- Want to see the best eBook in the world? The three BolognaRagazzi Digital Prize winners http://youtu.be/QJuqwsX0rWc were announced this month. But there were many important lessons about children's media lurking in the 252 entries, described in detail on page 6.

- The "new" iPad doesn't seem all that new according to our test at http://youtu.be/7WNUZepfu3A. It's a slightly heavier, warmer and the cameras are brighter and smarter. The voice input option is handy, letting you talk as well as type. But the apps we tested performed similarly, with the exception of The Numberlys, which loaded a few seconds slower on the older iPad.
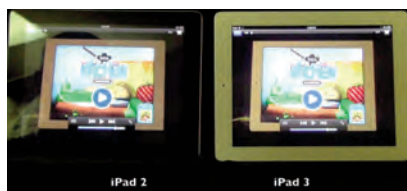
- A pack of Android tablets is headed your way, with iPad-like multi-touch features and prices as low as $130. See a quick summary at (http://nyti.ms/H07tqF); for more detail and the Children's Tablet Evaluation Instrument, see page 4.

- Why does the iPad have so much appeal to a young child? That's the question that led me to a talk called "Ten Affordances of Multi-Touch" given at the EETC conference in Utah. It is thick with demos. http://youtu.be/-9MIHbImgU8

- Donahoo, Donohue & @davidkleeman have been helping us understand the NAEYC technology position statement. From his perch in Australia, Daniel Donahoo notes (http://huff.to/GUPQGz) that NAEYC's paper means the conversation about children's tech is changing from one of limits (per the American Academy of Pediatricians) to one of "let's explore it, and see what it can do," as long as it "does no harm." Read the statement at http://bit.ly/AD2Lrl, as you tune your browser to YouTube, for Chip Donohue's EETC talk, at http://youtu.be/yyA8M3xsQFc. Chip makes the words come to life.
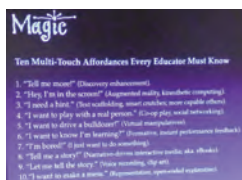
- I was a moderator for "Babies Brains & Video Games," an interesting and at times contentious panel organized by The New America Foundation's Lisa Guernsey. It was interesting to see how different news outlets selectively quoted—often inaccurately— parts of the dialog. Fortunately the YouTube truth can shine through, at http://bit.ly/FRPrEn

From left to right: me, Annie Murphy Paul, Rosemarie Truglio and Lisa Guernsey

- With all the buzz about deep sea exploration, we decided to hunt for submarine sites and videos, on page 3.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

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Sites and videos about

SUBMARINES

Last month, a submarine called the Deepsea Challenger took explorer James Cameron to the deepest part of the ocean, more than seven miles down. Subs like his use some amazing technology. Did you know, for example, that a nuclear submarine can go for 30 years without refueling? It can also make it's own air and drinking water! Want to learn more? No need to hold your breath. Here are some links and movies.

Q. Which is greater, the highest mountain or the deepest ocean?
A. The ocean wins. If the highest mountain, Mount Everest, were placed on the floor of Challenger Deep (part of the Mariana Trench) there would still be over one mile of water piled on top, according to http://visual.ly/tallest-mountain-deepest-ocean-trench. You can see some satellite photos at http://bit.ly/l8yrBJ.

Q. When was the first American military submarine made?
A. The Turtle http://1.usa.gov/lLxBhJ was built in 1775 to break the British naval blockade in the New York Harbor. It had a hand-driven propeller.
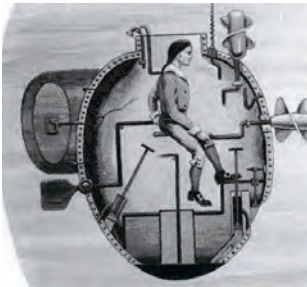
Q. T/F A submarine go under the North Pole
A. At http://www.subguru.com/nautilus571.htm you learn about the Nautilus, a nuclear submarine that was the first to go under the North Pole.

Q. How much does a submarine cost?
A. At least as much as a very nice car, for even the cheapest model. At http://www.ivccorp.com/kits.html you can buy a Sportsub kit (pictured to the right) for about $50,000. You should know how to scuba dive before you use one.

APPLICATION: **Does it float or sink?** At how stuff works http://bit.ly/cFNTOp, you can learn more about how subs use a "ballast" to go up or down (float or sink). Get a ball of clay and put it in a bucket. It will sink. But make it into a hollow ball, and you can see how the same substance, of the same weight, will float.

Go inside a submarine. There are 25 submarine museums located in the USA. First visit this site and see if there's one near you: http://www.submarinemuseums.org. Next, bug your mom or dad to take you.

Make a submarine. If you're really serious about your submarine experience, visit http://www.submarineboat.com/submarine.htm and get the instructions on how you can build your own working submarine.

Above: A Google Earth image of the Challenger Deep. Below, the Sportsub from IVC
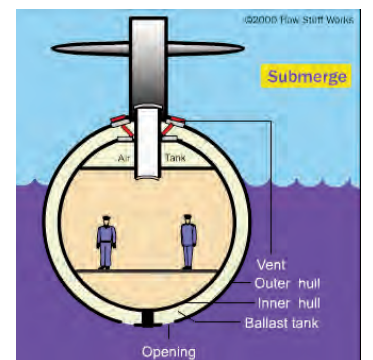
You Tube™ LittleClickers YouTube Playlist: Submarines

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL856DB7FB2500AEDE

Eight Android Tablets for Children

by Warren Buckleitner

A pack of Android touch-screen tablets are due to arrive in stores by the end of the year. Can they open a new pipeline—and a related market—for non-Apple, non-iTunes apps? Can they satisfy an iPad-loving child? How do they compare to one another? Here's a closer look at each contender.

Before I begin, let's first consider the attributes these tablets share. Each follows a similar recipe. Start with a stock 7-inch multi-touch screen tablet, of the Samsung Galaxy Tab variety, with Wi-Fi, accelerometers, a camera and a microphone, then layer over family friendly features such as a specialized menu system, a special store and Internet filtering. Add on a pink or blue shockproof silicone bumper for frosting, and give parents and loving grandparents a special store to buy apps.

Not all tablets are created equal. Some subsidize prices as low as $130 with the prospect of future app sales. Others are simply buggy or have weak batteries. When compared to the iPad, you also notice that a different, lower grade glass is used that is less slippery. This is one of the reasons I can easily say, none come close to the elegance and app selection on the iPad -- it's like comparing ice milk to Ben & Jerrys. But, these tablets cost much less, and they certainly offer more features per dollar than LeapFrog's **LeapPad** and VTech's **InnoTab** -- the toy tablets from Leapfrog and VTech that don't run Android. Here's a closer look at each.

Leading the pack is **Nabi** by Fuhu ($200, http://www.nabitablet.com/), a tablet with a split personality. One is for children, the other for parents who know the password. According to online reviews, Nabi has become well-loved since it was released, last fall. Features include a mini-HDMI out port for big screen use, well-designed menus and parental features that make it easy to customize your child's experience. When in Mommy Mode, Nabi becomes a fully functional tablet with a front-facing camera. Pre-installed apps include Cut the Rope and Need for Speed Shift by EA, proof that this tablet has horsepower when needed. According to Fuhu, a major upgrade is planned for June, which includes dual cameras, multiple child accounts and the latest version of Android.

For your child's germ-free tablet experience, **Playbase+** by Kurma ($190, www.playbase.com) offers an anti-bacterial screen coating and a "medical-grade silicone cover." Other features include a front-facing camera and eight GB of storage. The aluminum-backed tablet prototype that I tested suffered from an unresponsive screen and weak batteries, however, helping to minimize a child's desire to leave germy fingerprints in the first place. Apps come by way of two pre-installed app stores: Soc.io and Appslib; filtering is provided by NetNanny.

For the "get-my-baby-into-Harvard" demographic, **Vinci Tab** by Rulingnet Corp. ($389 and up, http://vincigenius.com/) wraps the familiar 7 inch screen in distinctive toddler-friendly red handles. Features include a poorly designed software library consisting of ebooks and songs, and no Wi-Fi removing the possibility of a child wandering online. Additional apps can be downloaded for $35 each from a specialized store. Upgrades, plus a pocket-sized model called **Vinci Tab M** are scheduled for this summer. See http://youtu.be/QQWFyV41TBA.

Child Pad by Archos ($130, www.archos.com) is the world's first movie-themed tablet. The first edition, due next month, features Alvin & The Chipmunks 3 on the home screen. Child Pad is made by veteran Android tablet maker Archos (www.archos.com) who say that the silicon wrapped tablet will come with 28 pre-installed apps, plus the AppsLib (http://appslib.com) Android app store. A six-month trial to the French-made Editions Profil's Mobile Parental Filter (http://www.profiltechnology.com) is included; after the six months, the white list stops being updated unless you sign up.

For a locked-down, gated digital experience, **Fable** ($130), due this fall from Massachusetts-based Isabella Products http://isabellaproducts.com/our-products/fable-tablet.html serves up songs, pictures and apps by way of a center-mounted carousel and Home button. When online, the tablet can be synced so that photos and videos can be shared from a common cloud. The micro-SD card slot further expands the 4 GB of internal storage and the rear-facing camera turns Fable into a digital camera. According to inventor Matthew Growney, Fable was made deliberately to resemble a serious, iPad-like device. See http://youtu.be/EzmRivNNzMo.

Designed in France, **Kurio7** by Kidz Delight ($200, www.kurioworld.com) is the only tablet to offer both a standard 7-inch option as well as larger screen sizes, including a $330 10" iPad-sized model. The tablet will be sold in the USA by Technosource. Parental controls let you configure the device for up to eight individual children, and there are slots for both mini-SD memory expansion and a mini-HDMI plug. The 7-inch version works with a specialized car holder for road trips. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coov40lJ200.

Also from France, the **LexiBook Tablet** ($150, http://group.lexibook.com) is one of a line of age-specific tablets planned for the US market this year. Unique features include an external plug-in keyboard and word processing software. That, combined with the micro-SD expansion port are designed to appeal to a student. According to the spec sheet, this tablet has the best battery life with 20 hours of run time. See http://youtu.be/d1Lhd3WciFM.

Finally, **MEEP!** ($150, Oregon Scientific, www.oregonscientific.com) offers typical features -- a front-facing camera, Wi-Fi, micro-SD card, HDMI and parental controls -- with one large exception: the screen. Unlike the other tablets, this screen uses infrared LEDs to sense how hard you are pressing the screen, using a technology called zForce by Neonode, Inc. http://bit.ly/H08cbT. Movies, music and apps will come by way of a specialized store. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snfm2RiguW8

So there you have them: a set of eight iPad alternatives that didn't exist a year ago. Keep in mind that this is a first look at an emerging category, so features, prices and availability are likely to change. We'll keep each record updated in our review datebase as these details emerge.

Children's Tablet Evaluation Instrument

(1 = low, 5 = high; NA = not applicable)
Here are some things to test when camparing tablets designed for children.
- ___ **Easy to turn on and off**. All tablets start with a simple test to make sure you're a human. The first is to find the power and/or home button. In some children's tablets, this all important button is obscured by the silicon bumper.
- ___ **Screen responsivity** is the first thing I check. Here's how -- Start a drawing program and move your finger across the screen, making a curved line. Gradually speed up. Does the paint keep up with your finger? If you notice a significant lag, be sure to try a few apps, to make sure the lag is with the processor, and not the app.
- ─── **Battery life**. This might seem obvious, but we've noticed a lot of variation between different tablets, from 4 to a claim of over 20 hours. Unfortunately, this is not a number you can easily test or check, until you own the tablet, so watch the online reviews carefully. Make sure you get at least 6 hours of continuous, solid run time.
- ___ **Easy to get online.** Tablets are computers, and they need to be able to easily sniff existing Wi-Fi networks and get you in. Some tablets do this essential job better than others. In addition, there may times when you want the tablet to be offline, so check to see if it is easy to disable the Wi-Fi.
- ___ **Parental controls.** Here's where the iPad excels. Is it easy to turn off Wi-Fi, in-App sales, and/or access to YouTube, without disabling the tablet?
- ___ **Can you download a copy of Angry Birds?** A tablet is only as good as the apps it can run. That's why I always try to download a few apps. Is it easy to find an app store, set up an account, and find children's content? It is easier said than done in most cases.
- ___ **How well does the tablet run Angry Birds?** Whenever I'm given a demo of a new tablet, I ask the developer to let me play a quick round of Angry Birds. This quickly tells me (a) that the tablet can access mainstream content, and (b) the tablet has the innards that can deliver most games. I can also listen to the speakers and try to adjust the volume.
- ___ **How's the camera?** Not all tablet cameras are the same, so try a few pictures. Some tablets have front facing cameras which are good for face shots; others are on the back, making the tablet into a digital camera. After you take a few shots, can you find them and easily transfer them to your computer?
- ___ **Durable.** Will the tablet survive a drop on the floor? Enough said.
- ___ **Expansion & Connectivity.** I always like to see a mini-SD card or SD card slot as well as a mini-USB plug, say for transferring photos and/or music to and from the tablet and a computer. A mini-HDMI port is extremely useful for plugging into external monitors.
- ___ **Peripherals**. Some tablets give you a choice of bumper colors, plus things like extra speakers, and an external keyboard.
- ─── **Price.** All things above considered, how much does it cost, vs. what does it do? How does it compare to the iPad and other Android tablets?

Apps that Tell Stories
by Warren Buckleitner

Notes from one of the Jurors (me) of the first BolognaRagazzi Digital Prize

Children's storytellers have an age-old tradition of being geeks, tapping the latest new technology to spin a yarn. Over one hundred years ago (1902) Beatrix Potter stubbornly insisted on using a very expensive Hentschel three-color press (http://bit.ly/z1cB5A), much to the chagrin of her budget-minded publisher. But the illustrations popped (or hopped) off the page and Peter Rabbit became a classic.

In 1940 -- that's 60 years BI (before iPad)—an unknown Dorothy Kunhardt started testing "interactive" books with her own children. She glued mirrors, cotton and a scraps of sandpaper to the pages. **Pat the Bunny** made the reviewers (and printers) scratch their heads, until others started to copy her methods and her books became best sellers. Kunhardt's son, said "for my mom a children's book was nothing more or less than a way to talk to children. And if along the way the pages of the book had to float in a bath, had to squeak, had to bounce, had to light up, had to change color...even if the book had to be eaten, that was O.K. -- because that was all part of the delight." (http://nyti.ms/zxQQHY).

Looking at the winners, from left to right: Cristina Mussinelli (Juror, Milan, Italy); Marco Momoli and Mirandola Meri of the Bologna Children's Book Fair; Chris Meade (Juror, London, England) and André Letria (Juror, Lisbon, Portugal).

Today, both of these classics are in iTunes, and they can run on your iPad. Would Potter and Kunhardt like the apps? This type of question was the first challenge put to the four jurors (of which I was one) of the BolognaRagazzi Digital Prize, a new collaborative effort between CTR, the 2012 Bologna Children's Book Fair and TOC Bologna. I'm just back from the judging (writing this article on the plane, in fact) and thought it might be interesting to capture some of the lessons we learned as judges.

THE ENTRIES consisted of 252 products from 179 publishers representing 25 countries. In order to enter, your product had to be published in the past year, and you had to supply a set of download codes. The titles were entered online by way of an online form; there was no cost to enter.

THE JUDGING took place over approximately four months. We narrowed the list using a shared Google doc and Google Hangout. It is worth noting that without these features, combined with the cloud-based content distribution used by iTunes, a contest such as this one could not have been possible. We made the final choices in person, meeting the day before the start of the Book Fair.

*Above: The signed ballot for **Dans Mon Rêve**. Below: A screen from the winner.*

THE WINNER, by a close margin, was from France. **Dans Mon Rêve** (translation: In My Dream) by De e-Toiles Editions nosed out the others by combining original art by Stéphane Kiehl with a tried-and-true non-linear interactive technique. It's worth emphasizing that old fashioned attributes like good narrative and original art still count (a lot) in the digital age. This is a simple app -- The idea is that you illustrate a dream and a three-line poem at the same time, welding together the images with the words. The educational implications of this technique, for emerging readers were also considered by the jurors. Finally, this was one of the few apps that broke the "read to me" and "let me read" way of thinking.

HONORABLE MENTIONS. The book fair allowed us to select only two titles as honorable mentions. We could've easily picked 15. The two we finally settled on (not in any order) were **The Numberlys** by Moonbot Studios (USA), an app that we jurors called an "impressive feat of animation and design" and "one of the most sophisticated, creative alphabet books ever made." Other winning attributes included a multi-layered story that could appeal to both children and

sous une pluie multicolore,
deux fantômes farceurs s'amusent,
dans un pot de fleurs.

adults, original art, amazing craftsmanship, and hooks for social play -- so two children could play together.

The other selection was from Brazil. **Quem Soltou o Pum?** (Who Let the Fart Out?) by Atendimento Editora Schwarcz isn't very sophisticated from a design point of view. In fact, it pales in comparison to titles like **Cinderella by Nosy Crow** and **Another Monster at the End of the Book**; both titles from the short list. But the jurors voted for the story, noting the love, wit and humor that came through the multi-touch screen. This app is a reminder that interactivity should never get in the way of a good story.
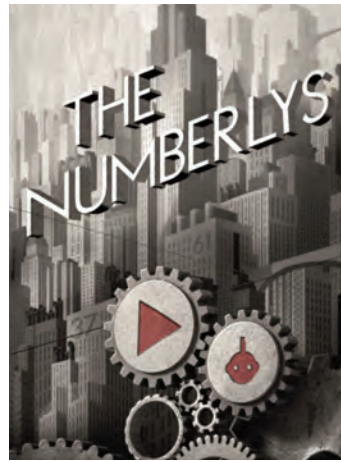
JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. The pool of 252 entries contained some incredible examples of design. I've hand picked a few titles from the list that are worth a look; they are listed here in no particular order.

La Forêt Mes Premieres Decouvertes (France) by Gallimard Jeunesse. It may not have a strong narrative element, but the illustrations and interactive design are stellar. The diorama-like design and tilting 3D make the facts jump to life. This is one of my favorite entries.

Another Monster at the End of This Book (USA) by Callaway Digital Arts was another "almost" winner. The story, in brief, is very funny, and creatively pulls you right into the narrative in a way that few stories have done before. It is a good example of using the bells and whistles for the story, not against it.

Both **Bizzy Bear at the Farm** (UK) by Nosy Crow Limited, and Nosy Crow's **Cinderella** (full title **Cinderella by Nosy Crow**) should be on every librarian's ebook shelf. The apps include state-of-the-art in child narration, and creative elements shin through every screen.

Go Away, Big Green Monster (USA) by Night and Day Studios kept coming back up in conversation, due to the progressive structure of the design. Children take control of the "scary" monster as they remove or subtract colors (the background of each page is the color that is the same as parts of the monster). This is a great app to read to a group of children, although it could benefit from a self-narration (record-your-own) feature. See http://youtu.be/nVIDTfwGuwI

The Going to Bed Book (Canada) or any of the Loud Crow Interactive should also be on your "well-crafted" list although the jurors questioned the book metaphor (old thinking) forced onto the iPad screen (new thinking).

It's a Small World (USA) by Disney Publishing Worldwide Applications was another solid top ten pick, with amazing art, music and a non-page format. But one juror jokingly called it "a celebration of cultural stereotypes from every nation" due to the Egyptian pyramids and Chinese dragons.

Fantavolieri (Italy) by Gioia Marchegaini comes from Rome pulls you inside the world of a little girl who dreams about birds. While there's not a lot of content, the original art is nicely meshed to the interactive elements. See the review in this issue.

Es Así (It is so) by Fondo de Cultura Economica is a hauntingly beautiful story from Mexico (Paloma Valdiva) that deals with a hard but necessary subject; death and

dying (or coming and going). The conclusion, after 14 interactive watercolor and color collage screens ... "it is so."

The Phantom Clickerist (UK) byJerome Keane is something that looks and sounds completely unique. Best describes as a zany comic, the app introduces "environmentally aware" themes to children, through the adventures of three friends. Interactive elements include a creative use of the accelerometer, so that nearly every screen responds in some way to screen movement.

Alphabeast (UK) from The Lonely Beast is a good example of bringing an artists ideas to the iPad. In this case the artist was Irish illustrator Chris Judge. The 26 interactive hand-drawn scenes feature simple, but useful interactive elements that reinforce the letter themes.

Professor Revillod's Universal Animalarium (Mexico) by Fondo de Cultura Economica from Mexico lets you do such things as stick the head of a shrimp onto a rhinoceros. The clear graphics and faux scientific validity make this app noteworthy.

il MostroPino (Italy) by Stefano Bruscolini lets you play with a beautifully illustrated set of zany monsters. It is noteworthy for it's visual presentation and character development, but less so for its interactive design.

There are many more, but space is limited. The main lesson from this year's contest is— the professionals (children's book authors and publishers) have arrived in the app store, and they're figuring out how to use, and when not to over use, interactive storytelling techniques.

When we first started designed this prize, we were worried that we might not get any entries. What we saw at the end were repeated examples of clever and imaginative work. The objective— to thrill and delight a young child with a good story, is the same as it was 100 years ago. But, the tools have never been more interesting.

Feature Reviews

APRIL 2012

Here's an alphabetical listing of new products, along with a full review, specific ratings and tester feedback. The "Entry Date" refers to the date we first learned of the product.

Adventures of Peter Pan HD, The

You can bring the world of Neverland to life, in your choice of language, with this rendition of Peter Pan, (with a setting for both younger and older readers). Each page has a bucket of pixie dust that you control with your finger. If you wave it over an item, it may come to life.

Pages can be changed by swiping, plus there is an easy-to-access table of contents. Both the on-screen text and audio narration can be toggled and examined, and children can have the story read to them, or read it on their own.

Features of the enhanced HD version include: touch pronunciation (touch any word to hear it spoken), explain to me (gives the word's definition and opposite to provide context for unfamiliar words), show me (illustrates the word), and Karaoke reading (a tool that helps children learn to read the story themselves).

Two versions of The Adventures of Peter Pan are available: an enhanced HD version for iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch (USD $3.99), and a streamlined, non-interactive version for iPhone and iPod touch ($0.99). Designed by French publisher Chocolapps' (formerly So Ouat!) this app contains 42 screens/pages of content. If you're looking for on the fly reading features, you can't do better than this app.

Details: Chocolapps, www.so-ouat.com. Price: $3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, Engish, French, German and Dutch. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 11/28/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	9
Entertaining	9
Design Features	10
Good Value	9

90%

Aesop in Rhyme - Hare and Tortoise

We've reviewed a lot of Aesop's Tortoise and Hare themed apps over the years, but none have been as creatively illustrated as this one.

Based on an early rendition of the story, this app adapts an animation technique called scanimation to create the illusion of motion. This is done by moving vertical black and white lines against one another -- one in the foreground, the other in the background.

The best part is in the "Let Me Read" mode, where you control the speed of the animation. No color is used, other than to highlight words as they are read. Weaknesses, include the formalized (orginal, we are told) story, and text that feels like an afterthought to the presentation. You can cut the rope that holds the text to make it drop and bounce, as well as switch between different narrator voices. This app was created by Marmaduke Park and Umesh Shukla. Shukla is also the publisher.

Details: Auryn, Inc., http://auryn.com/. Price: $0.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, animation. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 3/16/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	9
Entertaining	8
Design Features	10
Good Value	8

86%

Alphabeast

This is a simple flash card app based on the Irish illustrator Chris Judge's picture book, featuring The Lonely Beast.

The 26 interactive hand-drawn scenes featuring the Beast (a large, dark hairy creature with two eyes), and his friends as they explore each letter of the alphabet. The animated routines are well designed and work to support the letter/word associations. These include playable musical instruments, dancing robots, spinning bow ties and laughing monkeys. The narration is provided by the author; music is by Simon Judge. All in all, this is a nice addition to your early reading app folder.

Chris Crowell said "My students liked this app. The pages, while limited in interactive use of the touch capabilities, were engaging."

Details: The Lonely Beast, http://thelonelybeast.4ormat.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: alphabet, letters, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 2/22/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	88%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	

Barefoot World Atlas

Featuring a 3D spinning globe interface, this children's atlas makes it possible to zoom in and pull out of a globe view, and to explore surface-level facts and photos on several hundred topics, including basic facts about each country. These facts can be compared with a touch (for example, for Mali) to learn the current time, weather, distance from you (the app knows where you are), and then compare land area, highest point, currency, transport per 1,000 people, and average CO_2 emissions. Some of the items include 3D models, but this type of content seems scarce.

The Atlas starts with a bang, with an attractive, spinning 3D globe that is fun to just explore. Touch a baseball player, and you can hear a narrated paragraph on the history of baseball. You can also touch a photo icon to see a related photo. Once you've had a look, arrow keys lead you to the next topic, in alphabetical order. Or, you can pull back and swipe to a new part of the world, touching another object to learn more. The highlights feel limited, despite listing about 430 items in the database. In the USA, for example, there are just 21 items, including the Statue of Liberty, some peanuts and a baseball player. If this is truly an Atlas, this selection is limiting. Perhaps, a better title should be "Atlas of tourist attractions."

The illustrations are by artist David Dean and the text narration is by the BBC's Nick Crane. The 3D rotations of historical objects come from the Royal Geographical Society. The live country facts are supplied by Wolfram/Alpha and this includes real time weather, providing you're online. All in all, there's plenty to explore, and the spinning globe organization works far better than a book.

Details: Barefoot Books, www.barefootbooks.com. Price: $7.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geography, science. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 3/29/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	88%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	

Being Global

Good content and a fun song combine with limited interactive design in this 24 screen app, adapted from a printed book by Rana DiOrio, illustrated by Chris Hill. The app playfully addresses the question, "what does it mean to be global?" and gives you the idea that the world would be a better place, if we all thought globally.

Features include on-the-fly toggling between Spanish and English, narrated sentences and limited animation on each screen. It is easy to change pages or jump to another page. Other features include a coloring book, a journal where you can type your own sentences and drag and drop stickers onto a blank page, a set of lesson plans and a quiz.

So why not a higher rating? The interactivity feels a little clunky. Being Global is published by Little Pickle Press. It was developed by Kite Readers, both of which are creations of SachManya Inc.

Details: Little Pickle Press, www.littlepicklepress.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, Spanish, English. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 3/11/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	84%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	

¿Significa tener un globo terráqueo en casa? No.

Ben 10 Galactic Racing

There are quality racing games abound, but not with the comedic antics of Nickelodeon's Ben 10 gang. The latest PSVita version looks and sounds more real than ever, with 25 tracks and the ability to unlock additional cars.

You can play as Ben, or one of the 15 aliens. Content includes 25 grand-prix tracks from five planets. Even if you don't like the show, you'll like the game.

Details: D3Publisher of America, Inc., www.d3publisher.us. Price: $40. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Nintendo 3DS, Wii, Nintendo DS, Vita. Teaches/Purpose: racing, fine motor skills. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 10/17/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	N
Entertaining	10
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

90%

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Mild Cartoon Violence

Children's Picture Dictionary

This unremarkable talking picture dictionary contains 1,700 words accompanied by pictures and spoken sentences. Children can swipe through the pictures, just exploring, or they can search by keyword. To learn about the object, you just touch it. The Game Mode lets children practice what they have learned by matching words to pictures, multiple-choice style. This is a what-you-see is what-you-get type of app, with a dry presentation.

Details: Selectsoft , www.selectsoft.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, letter recognition, fine motor skills. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 3/26/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	6
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

78%

Count the Animals

Twenty clever, but potentially disturbing animated routines, actively engage children in counting, from 1 to 20.

The art is by Dutch illustrator Caroline Ellerbeck , who also published two Little Golden Books. The only drawback -- some of the illustrations are potentially disturbing. For example, in one scene you break fish tanks, and the fish lay in puddles on the ground. In another, rats jump onto a woman, and later, a boy hops around on turtle shells.

At least you can't say this app is boring. Options let you switch between 16 languages (Arabic; Chinese; Dutch; French; German; Greek; Italian; Japanese; Lithuanian; Polish; Portuguese; Slovakian; Spanish; Swedish; Swiss German; and English). So, if you want to learn to count in Chinese, here's your app, as long as you don't mind the odd themes, and a little blood. There is also a free lite version that lets you count to five.

Details: Appracadabra , . Price: $3.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: numbers, counting in 16 well known languages, including Spanish, English and Chinese . Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 12/6/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	9
Design Features	7
Good Value	7

80%
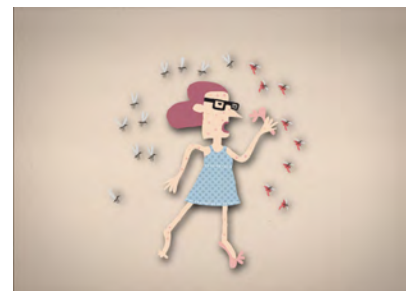
Counting with the Very Hungry Caterpillar

Ease of Use	9
Educational	2
Entertaining	1
Design Features	4
Good Value	4

40%

The traditional print edition of Eric Carle's classic book, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, is an effective way to let children informally discover quantity, as they help a caterpillar count/eat his way through the pages of the book. This app takes a different approach, using the food items cut from the book illustrations and turning them into a highly directive, self-correcting worksheet that deals specifically with numbers 1 to 10. The pedagogy could've come straight from the playbook of Edward Thorndike.

You start by choosing one of five levels, from easy to more difficult. These range from "please eat the strawberry",which is limited to touching an object to hear it counted, to a timed race where you must count specific food items from a set to earn points. Wrong answers result in an an "oops, you ate the wrong food" along with a red X. High points disappear after each round, and you're asked to play again. This type of multiple-choice-style presentation can work, as long as reinforcements are skillfully applied and are a context for the task, e.g., to climb a hill, post a leaderboard or collect stickers. This app is missing any of these essential elements.

To accompany the tedious task is tedious music --- a looping sixteen bars of Mozart already made famous by Baby Einstein. Fortunately, the music can be muted in an options menu, where you can also find an option to toggle off the repetitive directions and reinforcements. There are already hundreds of counting apps, and a few as pretty as this one. Does the world need another?

Details: Night & Day Studios, www.nightanddaystudios.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, counting (1 to 10) . Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2 stars. Entry date: 10/31/2011. [WB]

Dans Mon Rêve (In My Dream)

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	8
Design Features	10
Good Value	9

88%

Art meets app in this make-your-own dream machine, by letting you mix and match artistic elements with a left or right swipe. With each motion, the "dream" changes, along with an accompanying three-sentence poem, presented and narrated in French. There is no English option. The app features the art of Stéphane Kiehl.

Once you make your dream, you turn off the lights to reverse the image, thus changing the mood of the image. At any point, you can capture a photo of your dream to your iPad's photo gallery.

This title was the winner of the BolognaRagazzi Digital prize. Jurors said that this app breaks storytelling out of the typical page turning presentation. The image elements are particularly well-integrated with one another. See the video at http://youtu.be/QJuqwsX0rWc.

Details: e-Toiles éditions, http://etoiles-editions.com/. Price: $3.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, art, reading, poetry. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 2/21/2012. [WB]

Es Así (It is so)

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	8
Design Features	8
Good Value	10

88%

Created in Mexico, this beautiful, touching story deals with a hard but necessary subject; death and dying (or coming and going). The conclusion, after about 14 watercolor and color collage screens ... "it is so." There are no religious messages.

The content comes from a book by Paloma Valdiva. Each page is set to a peaceful piano score. The interactivity is minimal, and the Spanish narration is better than the English. The book could create a context in which to discuss a difficult subject. This is one of the most nicely illustrated apps we've seen.

Details: Fondo de Cultura Economica, www.fondodeculturaeconomica.com. Price: $4.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Spanish and English, death and dying. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 4/3/2012. [WB]

Fantavolieri

Bird and art lovers, keep reading ... available in Italian and created in Rome, this beautifully illustrated interactive storybook by illustrator Gioia Marchegiani pulls you inside the world of a little girl who dreams about birds. In some of the screens, you can draw your own bird. Drawbacks include a limited amount of content, and it is not possible to jump between pages. It is possible to toggle the background guitar music on/off, as well as the narration. There are some very nice touches in this beautiful app, which is why it was one of the finalists for the BolognaRagazzi Digital prize for 2012.

Details: Gioia Marchegaini, www.marchegiani.com. Price: EU 1.59. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, reading, birds. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 2/21/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	9
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

90%

Farm School

This is a collection of easy-to-play matching and hide-and-seek games, based on farm animals. Each screen contains a simple matching activity. For example, a child might be asked to find a sheep (hiding behind a bale of hay) or move a porcupine to collect falling apples that are counted. There are 20 animals, each labeled with both print and verbal cues. Correct answers are rewarded with stars, but you don't know why. Then, they just drift away and it's off to a new game. There is no way to get back to a main menu.

Weaknesses include a never ending, looping sound track that sounds like it was lifted directly out of a Duck Duck Moose app. One of the activities -- the pig feeding game, is sluggish. Most of this app is no-fail however, with enough variety to keep a child's interest.

Details: Yateland Games, www.yateland.net. Price: $0.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: some language, classification, names of animals, counting to ten. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 3/28/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	8
Design Features	7
Good Value	9

82%

Feed the Monster

More fun than educational, this app is full of burps and other bodily noises. The arcade-style games are based on the online game available at ZiggityZoom.com.

There are three play mechanics, plus a Monster Creator-where you can customize and name up to five monsters, who stay in storage. You can grab and drag food from a conveyor belt, and drop them on your monster's mouth to feed it. If you overfeed the monster, it will will explode. Other games include a food fight, and a food catching game. Mindless fun.

Details: Ziggity Zoom, LLC, www.ziggityzoom.com. Price: $0.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: timing, temporal relations, matching. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 12/8/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	5
Entertaining	9
Design Features	8
Good Value	7

74%

Flashcards for iPad

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	7
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

84%

Dry, but deep, here's an app that you might want to have on your iPad simply because of the hundreds of labeled photos to explore. The objects are sorted according to categories, including, animals, transport (this app was made in Australia, so there are some language differences), bodies, alphabets, numbers, shapes and colors.

Each screen (or flashcard) contains one simple interactive feature, such as a sound. Second language packs are sold as in-app sales, for $1.99 each. These can be purchased in the preferences screen and include support for Spanish, French, German, Italian and English. In addition, you can record your own voice for any word or letter -- a great feature for classroom use.

Two activities include Word Match (match the correct word with the image on the screen) and Spelling Game (drag and drop letters to make words).

Details: INKids Pty. Ltd., www.inkids.com.au. Price: $4.49. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 10/25/2011. [WB]

Focus on Earthquakes

Ease of Use	9
Educational	10
Entertaining	9
Design Features	10
Good Value	9

94%

This interactive earth science textbook has an amazing and very useful feature -- a real time seismic globe that shows the most recent earthquakes, as they happen. As a result, this is a wonderful way to show a class that we live on a continually moving, shifting planet.

The app is organized in ebook fashion, with illustrations, photos, narrated animations, and slide shows, along with quizzes and review questions to test and reinforce understanding. Specific topics include the causes of earthquakes; the relationship between earthquakes and faults; earthquake waves; seismometers and earthquake detection; locating the source of an earthquake; measuring the size of earthquakes; earthquake damage and large historical quakes; tsunamis, firestorms, landslides, and liquefaction; earthquake prediction; and an in-depth discussion of the relationship between earthquakes and plate tectonics. The app was written by Ed Tarbuck and Fred Lutgens, and illustrated by Dennis Tasa, to be used as an in-class tool or for independent study. Weaknesses include the globe rotation is hard to control.

This is a great way to bring the outside world -- quite literally -- into your classroom.

Details: Tasa Graphic Arts, Inc. , www.tasagraphicarts.com. Price: $3.99. Ages: 11-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: earth science, earthquakes. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 3/26/2012. [CC]

Go Away, Big Green Monster!

Ease of Use	10
Educational	9
Entertaining	8
Design Features	8
Good Value	9

88%
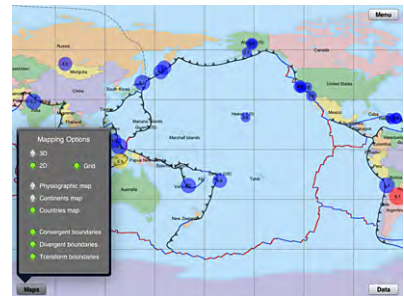
Bright clear colors and an innovative design based on the original book, lets children take control of the "scary" monster and learn how to not be afraid of it. Each page progressively reveals and then removes each piece of the Big Green Monster by cleverly changing the background screen colors.

Children can add the Monster's eyes, hair, ears, and nose, and poke him to see what he does. There are four modes: Read Along with a Friend (with a child narrator); Read Along with Ed (with author Ed Emberley as the narrator); Sing Along (turns the app into an animated experience, with music by performed by Ed's granddaughter Adrian Carney); and Read Yourself (which features no narration).

This is a great app to read to a class, although it could benefit from a self-narration (record your own) feature.

Details: Night & Day Studios, www.nightanddaystudios.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 3 -6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: monsters, sequencing, logic, colors, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/25/2011. []

Gube

Gube is a collection of over 500 pre-screened YouTube videos, each with no ads, and tagged by age. This makes it fun and easy for children to have a large collection of videos to watch, without the worries of inappropriate or low quality of YouTube content.

There's no shortage of science, episodes of existing children's programing like Sesame Street, and silly animals. Note that you'll need a live Internet connection.

The preferences let you filter the videos by age group (infant, toddler, pre-school, and grade school). A favorites list is automatically re-played with the continuous play function. We found no ads or worrisome content. Gube delivers as promised.

Details: Shacked, http://shackedapps.com/. Price: $3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: parent and teacher utility. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 2/22/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	90%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	

HappyKids - Veterinarian
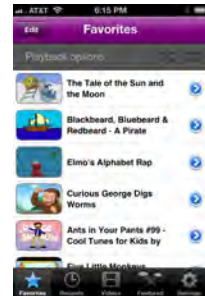
Turn your iPad into a vet's office, with this easy-to-play collection of 24 short, WarioWare style activities (referring to the famous Nintendo program where the games were 15 to 30 second bites).

The idea is to take care of six animals (two dogs, two cats, a parrot, and a cockatoo) by dragging and dropping bones back into place, clipping nails, combing hair, or catching fast-moving fleas.

The games were clearly inspired by Toca Doctor and some of the design and art is nearly identical. But, the two programs can't be compared. This one involves animals instead of people, and there could be more variety in the programming menu. External links are rare, with the exception of a poster on the main menu that takes you directly to the app store- which could lead to an accidental purchase. More importantly, the activities are not as fun as Toca Boca's. Classroom teachers may not appreciate the digestive noises which are sure to generate some giggles. The lesson of how to care for animals- clipping feathers and hair, removing bugs from coats, and trimming nails is admirable.

Details: happyKids, www.happykidsapps.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: classification, matching. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 3/27/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	80%
Educational	6	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	

il MostroPino

Play with a set of beautifully illustrated, zany monsters (on par with Moshi Monsters) in this Italian-language app. The narration is especially colorful, giving you a nice dose of the sound of a romantic language.

A monster creation studio makes it possible to construct your own monster. While the tools are clumsy and hard to use, once you figure them out, it is possible to create a wide variety of monsters. Creations can be shared in an online gallery.

Contents include 30 screens about a monster who is trying to be more scary, so he figures out that he can join a circus. The pages have spring loaded interactivity, and sound effects that are only secondarily connected to the story. This app is especially noteworthy for it's visual presentation and character development, and less so for it's interactive design.

Details: Stefano Bruscolini, www.ilmostropino.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: language, Italian, creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 3/14/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	82%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	9	

iWorldGeography Earth's Continents

Ease of Use	7	64%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	5	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	7	

Part of the iWorldGeography series, this is a dry child-narrated drill on country names, shapes, and locations.

It provides instant right/wrong feedback and is classroom friendly, but it lacks features, hints and record keeping. For example, when you finish the puzzle, you don't know you're done.

Children can touch a country to hear its name, or watch a movie with animated introductions, which is a bit like watching a child recite flash cards. A quiz mode asks children to locate countries and a puzzle requires reconstruction of the map. There is a Labeling Lightbulb that can be touched to study or peek at control maps. This app looks really clean, but it is really dry. See also iWorldGeography South America.

Details: TenSun Interactive, LLC, http://tensuninteractive.com/iWorld.html. Price: $0.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geography. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.2 stars. Entry date: 12/22/2011. [WB]

Jack and the Beanstalk

Ease of Use	8	74%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	7	
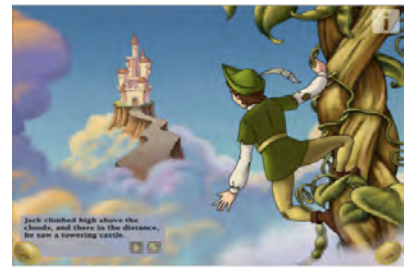
This is a 32 screen rendition of Jack and the Beanstalk that follows the original story line, with audio narration, read-along text, and some interactive features. For example, you can color in some pages in order to unlock the next page, or you can tilt the screen to watch the sun move. If you touch the bean, you can play a memory game. Features let you toggle on/off the narrator, or adjust the background music. Created by Ayars Animation.

Details: Ayars Animation, www.AyarsAnimation.com. Price: $25. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, memory. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 12/8/2011. [WB]

Kinect Rush: A Disney Pixar Adventure

Ease of Use	8	92%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Cartoon Violence

Great for one or two players (young, old or both), this Pixar-themed collection of movement games contains five multi-level games; each game is based on a different set of movie characters.

The graphics, sounds and narration are easily on par with the movie, making this a fun active extension of the movie experience. You start by entering a Pixar theme park, to move, you pump your arms (as if running). You'll soon discover different gates for the Incredibles, Ratatouille, Up, Cars 2 and Toy Story 3. Each story contains an obstacle course where you must jump, climb and run your way to the end. Even younger testers were able to experience success with this game, although there were a few times where they needed help (e.g., when picking up and throwing batteries in the Toy Story level).

A co-op mode lets a second player jump in or out of an activity at any point. The bottom line? If you have a Kinect system, get this game. Developed by Asobo Studio.

Details: Microsoft Game Studios, www.microsoft.com/games. Price: $50. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect. Teaches/Purpose: movement, gross motor coordination, timing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 10/19/2011. [WB]

La Forêt Mes Premières Découvertes

Ease of Use	9
Educational	10
Entertaining	8
Design Features	9
Good Value	10

92%

One of the best iPad references for children to date, La Forêt by Gallimard Jeunesse features clear, hand drawn, labeled illustrations, professional French narration, and a well designed table of contents. Features include 3D illustrations that respond to screen tilting, the ability to "paint" seasons with your finger, hidden animals and insects and realistic ambient sounds. Note, that there is no English language option. You can use this title to expose your child to a real immersive French experience.

It all adds up to an excellent science experience, in any language. There are six parts to the app: trees, seasons, life in the forest, flowers, forestry and types of forests around the world. The content is limited, but is of very high quality.

Illustrations are by René Mettler. Developed by Studio v2 for Gallimard Jeunesse.

Details: Gallimard Jeunesse, www.gallimard.fr. Price: EU $3.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, trees, the forest, biology, French language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 3/4/2012. [WB]

Le carabe des jardins

LetterSchool

Ease of Use	9
Educational	10
Entertaining	10
Design Features	9
Good Value	10

96%

Learning to write letters and numerals will never be the same after a child tries LetterSchool on an iPad's slippery screen. This single app from the Netherlands has raised the bar for all letter/numeral recognition apps. Content includes both uppercase and lowercase letters, as well as numbers from 1 to 10.

One of the most valuable features is the ability to toggle between three types of letters/numeral styles -- D'Nealian (used in many US schools), HWT (Handwriting Without Tears) and Zaner-Bloser (the "traditional" format). We also like how you can bookmark up to three sessions over time, so you can see which letters a child has experienced.

You start with a set of letters (or numerals, if you have it set up in numeral mode). The letters are set on a timed look, and might giggle or meow at you; effective, but potentially distracting. (It would be nice to either tone this down or have a mute button.) There are no cursive letters making this app more meaningful for the younger grades. In addition, we noticed that some of the animated effects, like the bubbles, feel unresponsive.

Each letter or numeral comes with three engaging tracing games designed to introduce the name, sound, and the strokes required to learn it. In Tap, children find the "magic dot" at the beginning of the letter, tap it, and watch as the first part of the letter comes to life. (The letters and numbers might be displayed as grass, that you mow as you trace.) You can then tap the next dots shown at the end of each stroke to complete the next line... when finished you earn a star, and unlock the next game.

Trace requires children to trace the letter correctly all the way to the end to earn a star and unlock the next challenge, Write. In this activity children must write the letter on their own without a helper line. This is the type of app that helps you remember why you paid $500 for an iPad.

Details: Boreaal Publishers, http://boreaal.nl/. Price: $2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: Handwriting, letter formation, numerals, upper/lower case, D'Nealian, HWT and Zaner-Bloser. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 3/1/2012. [WB]

Little Mermaid, The

|		
Ease of Use	8	86%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	

Featuring beautiful water color drawings, and nice ambient effects, this is a 28 screen rendition of the classic Danish folk tale, The Little Mermaid by Hans Christian Anderson, with illustrations by Lisbeth Zwerger.

The story is about the tension between the mer-people and the land people, and how a young mermaid rescues and falls in love with a human prince. The pages can be narrated. Nice features include some clever ambient animation. For example, you can smear the clouds with your finger, or tap the screen to splash the water. These effects are subtle and nicely done, not distracting from the story. In one page transition, a fish glides form one page to the next. All in all, this is a nice electronic adaptation of the printed story.

Details: Auryn, Inc., http://auryn.com/. Price: $0.99. Ages: 9-16. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 3/16/2012. [WB]

Little Miss Muffet HD

Ease of Use	8	76%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	8	
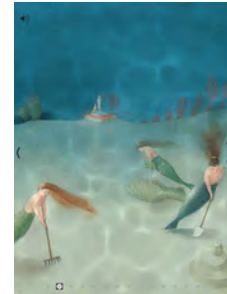
Three classic nursery rhymes hide children's voices and a chance to count, in this four screen children's app. The music and art is simple and nice. The interactive design is very simple, but children won't mind. There's not much content for $4, and include versions of "Little Miss Muffet", "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star", all sung by children.

Scene 1 covers words and spelling; Scene 2 - colors and numbers; Scene 3 - numbers and counting; and Scene 4 - two additional songs and drag & drop counting games. Not bad.

Details: Tantrum Solutions LTD, http://tantrumsolutions.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, counting. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 3/27/2012. [WB]

Look in My Eyes Restaurant

Ease of Use	8	80%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

Certainly one of the most unique (aka "strange") apps we've reviewed, this is a memory game designed to provide practice making eye contact, or "eye contact skills." It is designed for use with children with special needs, specifically those with autism and Asperger's Syndrome.

You are shown a close-up view of a person, and a numeral is shown on their retina for a few seconds (a rather interesting look). You are then asked to type in the number, making this a memory game. By answering the correct number, you earn money. But does looking at a picture of a person equal a real person? Perhaps, the same concept could be tried with a pair of special glasses that do the same thing. Certainly the research on the "screen deficit" is relevant to this discussion.

You can use the money you earn to buy things for your restaurant, creating a fun, accumulative play pattern.

Details: FizzBrain, www.fizzbrain.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: eye contact, memory. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 2/23/2012. [WB]

Monster Time

Ease of Use	7
Educational	8
Entertaining	9
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

80%
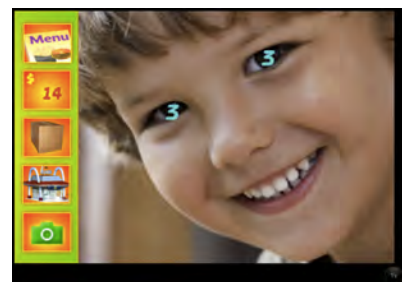
Designed to help children learn and practice the fundamentals of reading both analog (with hands) and digital (with numerals) clocks, this app drills children in a fun way -- five well designed monsters who have eyes that watch your fingers move on the screen.

Children can unlock up to 15 photos of the monsters by completing the three levels of difficulty for each character and earning 5 stars. In the easy level, time is kept on the hour and half-past the hour as an introduction to telling the time. In the medium level, time is tested at 5 minute intervals, introducing the concepts of "past", "to", "quarter past", etc. Getting an answer wrong will remove a star you've already earned. The hard level will test children across the full range of the clock, but in this round you have to earn 5 stars in a row to please the monsters. If you get a question wrong you have to try again. The excellent background music can be turned on or off. Other options let you select either 12 or 24 hour clocks. So why not a higher rating? Two reasons -- the challenges are presented in sentence format. It would be better if they were spoken. The second weakness is that the clocks are clumsy to change. You should be able to swipe to change the numbers on the digital clock, or easily move either the hour or minute hands on the analog clock. But, that's not the case. Hopefully this will be fixed in later versions, because the monster idea is done very well.

Details: Myello Digital, www.monstertimeapp.com . Price: $0.99. Ages: 4-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: telling time (both digital and analog). Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 3/29/2012. [WB]

Numberlys, The

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	10
Design Features	10
Good Value	9

94%

Pricey but amazing, The Numberlys ($5.99) will go down as perhaps the most zany alphabet book ever made. It comes from the studio that created The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Lawrence Lessmore, directed by William Joyce and Brandon Oldenburg of Moonbot Studios. The experience blends art and interactive surprises that support the compelling story.

You start with a story, told by a comical narrator with a thick (perhaps Russian) sounding accent, who tells the story of a grey society that has no letters or words -- only numbers. Based on the art style, it also has no colors.

As you swipe your way through the story, you help a small group of friends convert numerals like "8" into letters like "B" or "R" by shooting missiles, slicing the letters in half, bouncing on trampolines, spinning turntables, and so on. There's a routine per letter, giving you plenty of surprises. There is even an intermission -- a first for any app we've reviewed -- right after the LMNO. The navigation system makes it easy to jump between pages, and there are options that let you turn on/off the help and/or the narrator.

 The art mixes grey industrial art styles from the 1930's (a Metropolis look), with a totalitarianism, Big Brother theme. Because of the way in which the art, interactivity and story work hand-in-hand, this title was awarded an honorable mention in the 2012 BolognaRagazzi Digital awards.

Details: Moonbot Studios, www.moonbotstudios.com. Price: $5.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, art, music, the alphabet. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 3/14/2012. [WB]
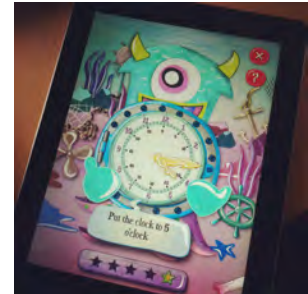
Pepi Bath (Pepi)

You might as well admit it; everyone "goes to the bathroom." We have to brush our teeth, wash our hands and clothes, take baths and clip our nails. This app is designed to playfully bring up these sometimes touchy topics, by way of a rather wild looking child named Pepi.

You start by choosing whether Pepi is a boy or a girl, and then are shown four icons (a washing machine, toothbrush, bath and toilet paper). You then help Pepi go through each routine, one step at a time. This app is on the edge of embarrassing, which explains why children are so drawn to it. It also is well designed -- there is no order to the routines, and you can try out ideas, like putting soap in your your eyes, in a safe context.

Some children were very upset when Pepi didn't put the used toilet paper in the toilet ("Why would you put it in the trash can? Yuck!"). The parent directions emphasize that the routine is only a suggestion -- each family can have their own discussion.

Details: Pepiplay, www.pepiplay.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: personal hygiene . Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 3/26/2012. [WB]

		84%
Ease of Use	9	
Educational	7	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	

Perfect Pitch Piano

Music teachers take note. Now you can turn your non-glitzy iPad into a small set of ear training exercises.

Perfect Pitch Piano (PPPiano) is designed to teach you to play piano by ear, by playing a copy-cat style game with your iPad.

Your screen displays a large, responsive keyboard that is just over an octave in size (17 keys) and sounds exactly like a piano. The app starts easy, playing a one or two note phrase and then waits for you to answer. The lessons get progressively harder; wrong answers give you another chance, depending on the settings. You can adjust the activity so that you can make as many as six mistakes. You can also change the pitch and tempo. One thing about this app that isn't obvious, is that additional levels and songs cost $.99 each.

All things considered, this is a great use of the iPad that music teachers will want to know about.

Details: Brad Jasper, . Price: $0.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: music, playing piano. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 11/28/2011. [WB]

		80%
Ease of Use	9	
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

Peter Pan: Disney Classics

Original art meets unoriginal interactive design, in this first in a series of Disney Classics storybook apps.

In the story, three children (Wendy, John and Michael) enter Neverland with Peter Pan and Tinker Bell. Children can touch some of the illustrations to hear them labeled. Some of the pages have typical jigsaw puzzles, games of concentration, or coloring pages. The design traps children, and it isn't always clear how to simply turn the page.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: $3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: coloring, some language, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2.8 stars. Entry date: 3/28/2012. [CC]
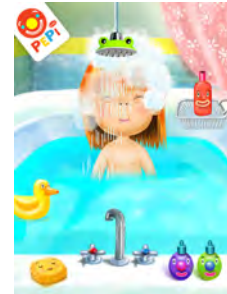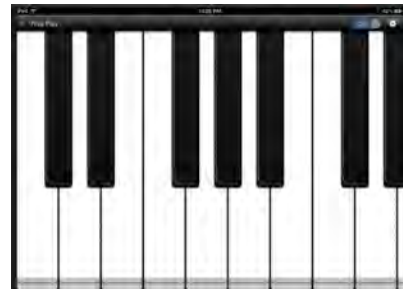
		56%
Ease of Use	6	
Educational	5	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	5	

Phantom Clickerist, The

This zany, creative, interactive comic introduces "environmentally aware" themes to children, through the adventures of three friends named Flash, Graham and Melody Tulip.

The 26 screen story is about the friends search to learn the identity of the Phantom Clickerist -- the person (or creature) who keeps turning out the lights. The creature, turns out to be a polar bear, who wants to prevent global warming.

The book was written by Jerome Keane and illustrated by Susana De Dios. Features include generous and creative use of the accelerometer, so that nearly every screen responds in some way to movement. Created in the UK, published by Jerome Keane.

Details: Jerome Keane, www.thephantomclickerist.co.uk. Price: $.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: environmental issues, conserving energy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 11/22/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	9
Entertaining	10
Design Features	9
Good Value	10

92%


PrestoBingo Shapes

How many circles can you find in a puzzle? This "I SPY" like shape finding game contains 12 puzzles. The objective is to touch the shapes to find them. For example, you might have to spot all the squares in a construction site. The app provides simple explanations of eight geometric shapes including circles, diamonds, ovals, rectangles, semi-circles, squares, trapezoids, and triangles. The app also reinforces counting from 1-20, because each shape is counted as it is discovered. The illustrations are original and very nicely done. The only drawback is that there is no hint system in case you get lost.

Details: Spur Design, http://joycehesselberth.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: classification, seriation, geometry. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 2/21/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	8
Design Features	9
Good Value	8

86%
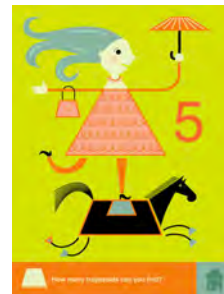
Professor Revillod's Universal Animalarium

How'd you like to stick the head of a shrimp onto a rhinosaurus? Now you can, with this interesting mix-and-match app from Mexico. By swiping the head, middle and tail, you can combine the creatures until you get what you want. Then, you can color your animal with a set of art tools. The app has a large download size (nearly 1 GB) and the content feels limited. The clear graphics and the subtle humor of this title, combined with the faux scientific validity are noteworthy.

Details: Fondo de Cultura Economica, www.fondodeculturaeconomica.com. Price: $4.99. Ages: 3-11. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Spanish, language, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 3/15/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	9
Design Features	9
Good Value	7

84%

Quem Soltou o Pum? (Who let Fart out)

Ease of Use	9	80%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	7	
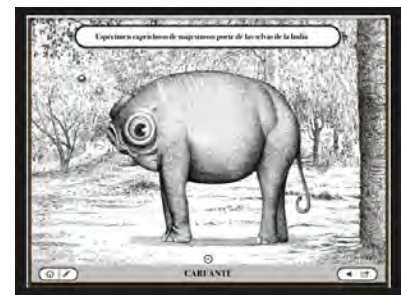
Featuring a simple art style and a compelling story about a trouble-making dog, Quem Soltou o Pum? (Who let Fart out?) is proof that you don't need a lot of bells and whistles to tell a story on the iPad.

The story is simple -- a much loved dog keeps making a mess, but the dialog (in Portuguese) is full of puns. The creative writing combined with the simple but compelling interactivity earned the title an honorable mention in the 2012 BolognaRagazzi Digital Prize. Too bad it doesn't cost less (the high price earned it a lower rating on our scale).

Details: Companhia das Letras, www.companhiadasletras.com.br. Price: $8.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, Portugese. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 2/19/2012. [WB]

Sticker Dolly Dressing

Ease of Use	9	84%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

Classic paper doll play comes to the iPad, complete with well-stocked libraries of shoes, hair styles, dresses, tops, bottoms and accessories. After you choose a doll, you pick a name and a setting (such as a barn or a wedding) then you start mixing and matching.

Choosing an item takes some doing -- you can't always just touch and drag the items you want, which makes the construction process a bit clunky. Once you get over this small learning curve, this app is easy to use, and provides plenty of creative options. Our favorite feature: a skin tone gradient tool that lets you choose how light or dark your doll's skin is. One drawback to this -- the darkest skin setting is clearly not very dark -- we'd suggest a bit more variation if this app is to be representative of all people.

Content includes 120 stickers, eight background scenes including a wedding, beach, shopping and a disco.

Each scene can be enhanced with things, such as, dogs, butterflies and ice cream cones. In addition, you can name each doll. A child's work can be saved as a photo. All in all, this is a solid paper doll activity kit.

Details: Usborne Publishing Ltd, . Price: $4.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: mix and match creativity, doll play, dressing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 10/11/2011. [WB]

Uxmal

Ease of Use	8	80%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

Part of the Brainy Fables series of storybook apps, Uxmal is an English/Spanish story about a young boy, Uxmal, who is growing up in the Mayan world. The story was written by Franco Soldi, illustrated in blue and white by Pedro Bascon. In the story, a local carnival brought together the county's strongest men to compete in the famous pyramid challenge, but none of them succeeds in throwing the coconut over the pyramid. But, then a little boy named Uxmal is able to do it, and changes the history of his town. The story is designed to teach children the importance of striving to "aim for the stars." There are two reading modes - Read to Me and Read it Myself; two language options - English and Spanish. Besides the hidden sounds on each screen, there is no interactivity or scaffolding.

Details: Brainy Fables, www.brainyfables.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 4-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, intrapersonal growth, goals. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 2/21/2012. [WB]

VivaKids' ABC

When does art and the alphabet collide? Have a look at this app. Featuring beautiful stop-motion animation, this app features 26 letter-themed animated routines.

It is especially designed to introduce children to various art techniques. For example, the letter V is made out of popping popcorn, which morphs into a volcano. After they watch the short video, children can trace the letter, uncovering a variety of interesting textures. There's no shortage of surprises, and it's fun to see the creative types of art projects gradually unfold on the screen. The tracing feels sluggish in some of the letters -- you notice a lag especially if you scribble quickly. It is easy to jump in and out of the letters to a favorite routine, or just explore. Developed by 1K Studios in collaboration with designer Ulrike Kerber.

Details: 1K Studios, www.one-k.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, letter recognition, letter formation, upper and lower case, alphabet. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/11/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	**88%**
Educational	10	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	

Write My Name

This clean, teacher friendly app is ideal for helping children learn to write their own letters and words using the correct sequence and strokes by tracing uppercase and lowercase letters.

Features include: meets some of the basic reading and writing Common Core State Standards for kindergarten such as the introduction and mastery of print and word recognition concepts; create 36 custom name tags with your own pictures and recordings to personalize learning for your child; animations upon completion of each letter or word; more than 100 common sight/Dolch words; records student progress as word cards are completed; and a fingerpaint mode that shows completed letters in child's own handwriting. There are no advertisements or in-app purchases

The app features three activity areas to explore: ABC alphabet book focuses on learning and tracing the individual uppercase or lowercase letters; Word cards introduces 100 common sight words where children trace words in uppercase or lowercase letters. Once the word is traced, the word card comes to life with colors and animations. When your child traces the word a second time a star stamp is added to the student's word journal; and My Name allows parents and teachers to create up to 36 custom nametags, including the child's name, with a picture for children to practice writing words or phrases that are especially meaningful for them.

This is one of many apps that could be used for a teaching rotation.

Details: Project Injini, http://www.injini.net. Price: $4.99. Ages: 4-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, sight words, upper/lower case, writing, letters. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 3/7/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	**94%**
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	

Zanny, Born to Run

This is a 12 screen/page short story about a little boy (Zanny) who can't sit still. While the page design and narration are less than top quality, the topic will certainly be meaningful to many parents or teachers. For example, many of the items you want to touch don't do anything, making some of the pages unresponsive. It would be great to see this story redone, with more interactive hooks and touch/hear text. Features include the ability to turn on/off the background music and/or the autoplay mode.

The story is designed to bring up, or illustrate the topic of children who can't focus- who might have special needs. Besides the story, a game called The Extra Special Feelings Game lets you paste expressions over a child's empty face, to match the feeling being described. This is designed for kids with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and PDD, to help them recognize feelings and facial expressions.

This is one of a series of ebooks and activities; each book in the series focuses on one child and one symptom, not a disorder. This is done so that any child can play with the app, to better understand another child's diagnosis. Other books include Little Lily's Touch Book and Timmy Tastes Textures. The books were written by Pamela Sloane-Bradbury for her son, Oscar, who has developmental disabilities. Illustrations are by Allison Garwood.

Details: Extra Special Kids, www.ExtraSpecialKids.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: children with special needs, autism, reading, expressions, feelings. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 10/14/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	**78%**
Educational	7	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	9	

Future Releases & Updates

This section contains a listing of products in the process of being reviewed, but not yet rated. We also include significant updates of older products.

ActivTable

Designed to increase classroom collaboration, Promethean's ActivTable is a touch-screen interactive table (See also the Smart Table) with 25 activities that have been mapped to standards.

The $8000,or so, table has a multi-touch screen, supports wireless web browsing, and can be integrated with the Promethean ActivBoard.

Other features include the ability to keep student records, capture sounds, and let up to six students play at once. The table has a 46" HD LCD display and can be adjusted in height for chairs and wheelchairs.

Details: Promethean, www.prometheanworld.com. Price: $7,999 and up. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Promethean smart table. Teaches/Purpose: a touch screen table for preschool. Entry date: 3/29/2012.

Adding Apples

This app is designed to illustrate how two sets come together. Content ranges from 1+1 to 9+9.

By pressing a numeral key, you see an associated set of apples roll onto the screen. Next, you must touch the correct answer from the three choices shown. At any time, children can touch the apples to hear them counted out-loud.

Correct answers earn large, golden coins. The app also features animations and sounds, and music can be toggled on/off. Also available as a download for your Mac. The app can store profiles for up to three children. Created by Tore Hansen and Torid Fonn.

Details: Operatio, www.operatio.no. Price: $0.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: adding, sets, counting, math. Entry date: 10/12/2011.

Beauty and the Beast HD

This iPad app retains the authentic text of Walter Crane's 1874 adaptation of Beauty and the Beast. It also contains the original illustrations, combined with tilt and touch controlled physics elements, touch animations, some character cutouts and sound effects. There isn't much new about the interactive component, but the story is the original version.

Details: Little Phoenix Interactive, http://littlephoenixinteractive.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, literature. Entry date: 2/15/2012.

Famigo Sandbox

This app is designed to let parents block a child's ability to make calls, send texts, or to get online.

It also claims that it can block ads, and in-app purchases, by creating a kid-safe partition in the phone's memory for access to only pre-approved apps. Famigo needs one click to open, but a passcode to exit. You can customize your child's "Sandbox" by adding or removing apps. There are two modes: Play and Manage. The Play mode is for kids and limits device functionality. The Manage mode is where parents customize the content and settings. The app also features Famigo's Family App Review recommendation engine which suggests new apps based on what you already have in your Sandbox.

Details: Famigo, www.famigo.com. Price: $free. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: a parental monitoring tool for Android phones. Entry date: 2/21/2012.

iWorldGeography South America

Part of the iWorldGeography series, this is a child-narrated drill on country names, shapes, and locations.

Children can touch a country to hear its name, or watch a movie with animated introductions, which is a bit like watching a child recite flash cards. A quiz mode asks children to locate countries, a puzzle requires reconstruction of the map, and a Labeling Lightbulb can be touched to study or peek at control maps. There is also a Flag Magnifying Glass that children can touch to view flags in greater detail. Note that this app did not work properly on the new iPad.

Details: TenSun Interactive, LLC, http://tensuninteractive.com/iWorld.html. Price: $1.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geography, South America. Entry date: 2/21/2012.

Kaplan SAT TurboTest

Kaplan Test Prep has teamed with Testive, an adaptive test development company, to create an adaptive 90 minute practice SAT for the iPad that claims to be able to reliably predict a test-taker's score level. It is designed to help students understand their current score without having to sit through a full-length four hour practice exam. It creates an individualized test experience for each student by adjusting the difficulty of questions as the test progresses. If a student answers a questions correctly, the difficulty level of the test increases. If they answer incorrectly, the test gets easier.

By adapting to the test-taker's ability, Kaplan claims it is able to create an accurate picture of the student's predicted performance more efficiently with fewer questions, and to give them the baseline knowledge they need to start the SAT preparation process. The Kaplan SAT TurboTest is available to download online and can be used on the iPad using a web browser.

Details: Kaplan Test Prep, www.kaplan.com. Price: $free. Ages: 15-17. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: Test prep. Entry date: 2/21/2012.

Kids 1st Shape Puzzle

Drag-and-drop jigsaw puzzles are abound in the app store. Here is another, with perhaps a larger inventory of puzzles to play than we've seen before. From the main menu, you can choose to hear the word and sound of animals, transportation, letters, numbers, and more when you correctly place the pieces on the puzzle.

After completing each puzzle, children will hear applause. The app contains 16 shaped puzzles, each with between 8-26 pieces. Language toggles let you toggle between English, German, Hebrew and French.

Details: Kids 1st Puzzles, www.kids1stpuzzles.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 2/21/2012.

Learn Chinese: Toy Story 3

Learn Chinese: Toy Story 3 is Disney's first language-learning product, in the form of a $5 iPad app. This is a significant app because it is the first in a series of leveled Disney storybooks that mix Disney characters with language learning methods designed to teach core English and Mandarin vocabulary and grammar.

This particular app contains five versions of Toy Story 3, presented in ebook form: Level 1 – English only; Level 2 – Beginning Chinese (25 percent Chinese); Level 3 – Intermediate Chinese (50 percent); Level 4 – Advanced (75 percent); and Level 5 – 100 percent Chinese. The app uses a technique called Diglot Weave and it contains bilingual narration across all levels. A 'Diglot Weave' story is told partially in the native language of the learner and partially in the language being taught. As the learner's understanding progresses, an increasing proportion of the story is told in the foreign language until the reader is experiencing the story entirely in that foreign language.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: $5. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, Mandarin Chinese. Entry date: 3/10/2012.
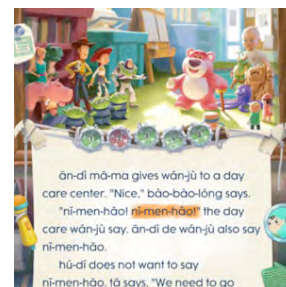
My First App Vehicles

Eight vehicles can be mixed, matched and turned into jigsaw puzzles or a pinball game. The background sounds can be toggled on or off. The first two games are very typical and found in a lot of apps, whereas the pinball game is unusual. You tilt the screen to steer a ball into a hole, in order to cause a random event.

Details: ApppMedia, www.apppmedia.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: classification, vehicles. Entry date: 2/1/2012.


My Word! Reader: Are Whales Smart, or What?

The second app in the My Word! Reader series, Are Whales Smart, or What?, is designed to improve word recognition and increase reading fluency by way of sight vocabulary, word analysis and comprehension games.

Children can read a page out loud, touching problem words (which are saved and reviewed at the end) or they can play six games that involve spelling words by unscrambling them, matching pictures with words, and so on. The games are fun, but we found at least one bug; in addition, there is no way to get back to the main menu.

Created by Dr. Selma Wassermann.

Details: Wrinkled Pants Software, www.wrinkledpants.com. Price: $4.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, comprehension, spelling, phonics. Entry date: 10/12/2011.
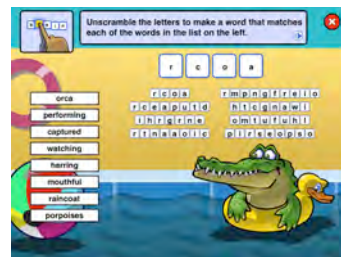

Painting With Time Climate Change Edition

This edition of the 'time painting' app lets your fingers reveal the ways our world could change from rising temperatures. For example, you can explore extreme weather events like floods and droughts that may be caused by climate change. Children can make glaciers retreat and disappear by speeding up time. The time lapse sequences were selected by Gary Braasch of the World View of Global Warming web site.

Features include 17 time lapse sequences of climate change, two 'time manipulation modes' - Painting and Slicing; eight preset brushes and slicing patterns; an illustrated summary of Climate Change; and a tutorial on making your own time lapse sequence. This is the second app in the series; both extensions of the NSF Funded "Exploring Time" documentary series and web site (hence the free price). Note that global warming and climate change are debated issues, and this app makes no reference to this debate.

Details: Red Hill Studios, www.redhillstudios.com. Price: $free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, time, climate change. Entry date: 3/15/2012.
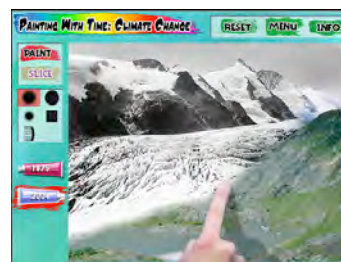
Royal iRover iS600 Interactive Teaching Center

The Royal iRover iS600 Interactive Teaching Center is a teaching easel that integrates a Interactive SMART Board projector, giving it touch screen capability. The angled position of the SMART Board "helps young students improve their writing and fine motor skills." Features include an integrated projector arm to reduce shadowing. Other features include storage tubs for manipulatives and resources, a big book rack, space for laptop or computer, chart hooks, and telescoping rods for hanging pockets charts. See the demo at http://youtu.be/omz_bFsqJZY.

Details: Copernicus Educational Products, www.copernicused.com. Price: $call. Ages: 3-6. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: A touch screen easel. Entry date: 3/29/2012.

SuperShell

SuperShell is a $30 foam frame (see also BigGrips) designed to help make an iPad easier to hold, and bounce if dropped on a classroom floor. It is available in five different colors, but colors other than lime green cost $5 more.

Unlike BigGrips, SuperShell covers the volume and on/off switches, making them a bit harder to use, according to one teacher tester. In addition, the cover blocks the microphone. In our tests, this damped the sound recording, but didn't completely block it. See the demo at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_c84wZGCes for a CES demo. You can purchase from http://www.medgestore.com/products/ipad2-supershell.psp?device=ipad3.

Details: M-Edge, www.medgestore.com. Price: $30. Ages: 2-up. Platform: A foam frame for protecting tablets . Teaches/Purpose: a perhipheral for iPads and other tablets. Entry date: 3/29/2012.

Worldreader.org

You don't need a fancy screen to read a classic novel, that's because text can be compressed and stored in the cloud. Then, it can be delivered to even the most remote village, providing there is a cell tower within range. But the ideas that are transmitted from author to reader could have a lasting effect, at least if things go as planned for the non-profit Worldreader (www.worldreader.org). Last month they announced a relationship with the Australian company, BiNu Pty Ltd (www.binu.com) to convert low-end feature phones into smart phones. Once installed, the phones can also be used for Facebook, Google, local news and Twitter, providing there is a cell tower within range, and, of course, some electricity. The end result is profound -- an unlimited supply of books, formatted for small screen delivery.

The Worldreader Foundation, originally started using Amazon Kindles, understandable considering the founder, David Risher, is a former Amazon.com executive. The BiNu software is free to download, but charges on a per-use basis for such services as SMS messages.

I recently met with Elizabeth Wood, Worldreader's Director of Digital Publishing, while at a conference in Italy, who shows how it works http://youtu.be/X7iM5Yke7VY. See the press release at http://bit.ly/zKOLj3.

Details: Worldreader, www.worldreader.org. Price: $free. Ages: 12-up. Platform: feature phone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, culture, literature. Entry date: 3/27/2012.