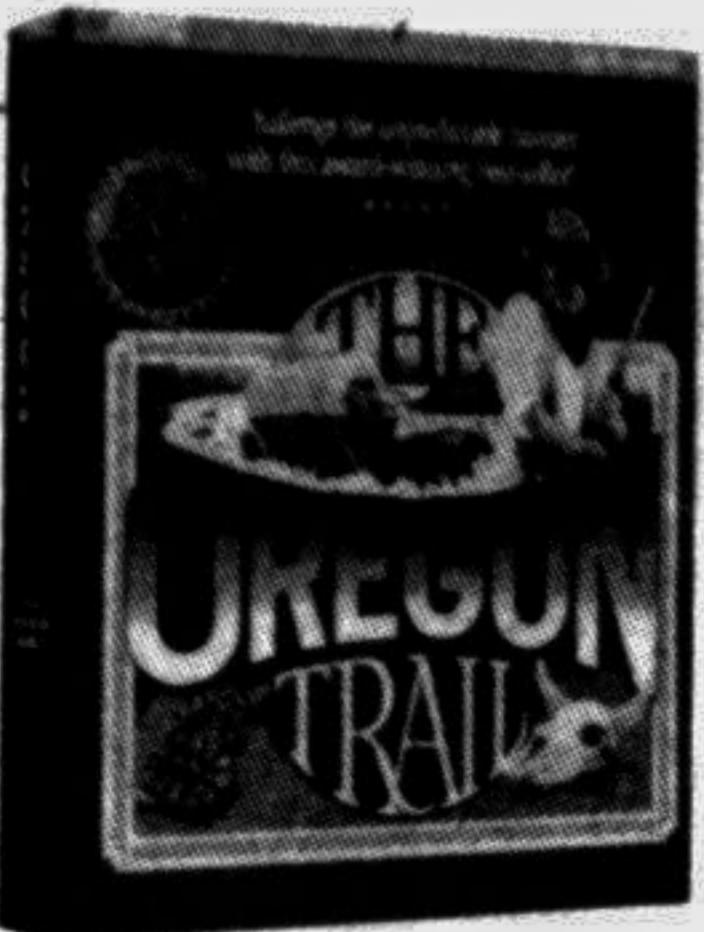


Edutainment for the Children: Learning Through Playing

by Sajid Rizwan Matin



HELPING children learn has always been a top priority for the parents, no matter how painstaking the process is.

The spirit of helping is undoubtedly needed, but what makes it harder for the children is the method and way of teaching. Usually school studies happen to be boring and dull for the young learners, especially for the impatient ones. Kids who are going to school have to spend most of the time preparing their homeworks and studying and learning the basic of grammar and language; whereas they should be playing more at this age.

The system of teaching compels them to learn, which they feel as an extra burden for them. Most of the kids, as a result, lose interest in learning.

The magic box on your desk top — the computer — if linked with multimedia can change this situation dramatically.

The best way for a child to learn is to learn through playing and in the broader sense, through entertainment. A child naturally loves games, and if some interesting educational teachings is included in such a game, the child will automatically absorb them while playing it. That is called 'edutainment' in the multimedia computer dictionary.

The concept of education wrapped in entertainment —

allows a child to acquire knowledge that would have been heavier and boring in the usual way.

So the MPC which is the short name for the Multimedia Personal Computer (usually loaded with multi session, multi function CD drive, sound card, speakers, mic) can now be declared as the best teacher at home. Whether it's for multimedia storybooks, interactive language guides or animated early learning software, computer is the perfect educational tool. When it is affordable. And currently more and more exciting and entertaining educational discs are appearing on CD-ROM.

For younger children there are some really delightful programmes almost similar to their coloring and picture books. And for older children there are plenty of other things on almost every popular topics — from dinosaurs to space travel — subjects guaranteed to widen their horizon of interests. The contents in the edutainment CD must be designed in an interesting way.

For many years now, the general approach to a computer was to learn about it. But now the focus is more on using computers and not just learning about them. In the western world even a five-year old school going child is seen to use computer. This work wouldn't mean that they are using it for word processing or spreadsheet, they are actually playing, and thus even at the earliest stages they are developing 'computer skills'. This may include learning how to work a keyboard and a mouse.

However, it would be foolish to think that in the present economic conditions Bangladesh will be able to provide each student a computer in primary school level. But an MPC is affordable to at least half of the middle class family. And day by day computers are becoming cheaper and

cheaper.

The educational software in the home are at their best when they are designed to teach preliminary skills, like reading, writing and counting, and even more diverse subjects like languages, history, physics and chemistry.

Lastly, it is a common misconception that young children will have problems operating complex 'multimedia' computers. In fact, there is no age limit, and children of three who can click a mouse can easily enter the exciting world of edutainment. However, there is no such education software in Bangla language. So it could be pretty hard for a child to understand thoroughly. But I have observed that a child can overcome this barrier of language very easily.

If the themes of the game is explained to the child for a few times he will eventually understand the whole game. This way the child's English vocabulary is likely to expand.

Things would be more simplified if I explain some edutainment CD which I myself have played. That proves that there is no age limit for games. At my age I still play games. As long as one has a mere inquisitive mind he or she would enjoy it.

Lets consider the game 'Busytown'. This game is set to teach more on language, equations and logic. The busytown has houses, shops, restaurant, a clinic, a fire station, and you are to travel around in an apple helicopter and descend to any part of the town you wish to. You don't have to face 'traffic jams' in Dhaka.

There are lots of places in the city where you can play. Each place has a 'mind game' or puzzle intended to enhance skills like reading, math, problem solving, logical deduction and critical reasoning. At every

place in the town the child takes up a personality in the game and helps to achieve a certain goal. Some activities are more demanding than the others, but as a whole, a good range of skills are tested. This means the game suits a wide cross section of talents as well as different age groups.

The storybooks are also very helpful in building a child's vocabulary. The story is read out page by page with pictures and animation, appearing on the screen. There are some pages left black and white for you to color them — so you can also take active part in it. The real fun begins when the whole page is read out; after that wherever or on whatever you click the mouse something funny happens.

For example, in the storybook 'The Pirate Who Didn't Wash', if you click on the smelly pirate on the deck, a bunch of terrible looking lice will fly out from his hair and land to the bird besides him. And almost every object on the screen will do something similar when you click on them. These actions are bound to make you laugh.

All these games, or kids' edutainment software, to be precise, are non-violent, rich in color and animation, it is creative as well. It is the best thing you can give a child, to introduce him to the world of education and knowledge.



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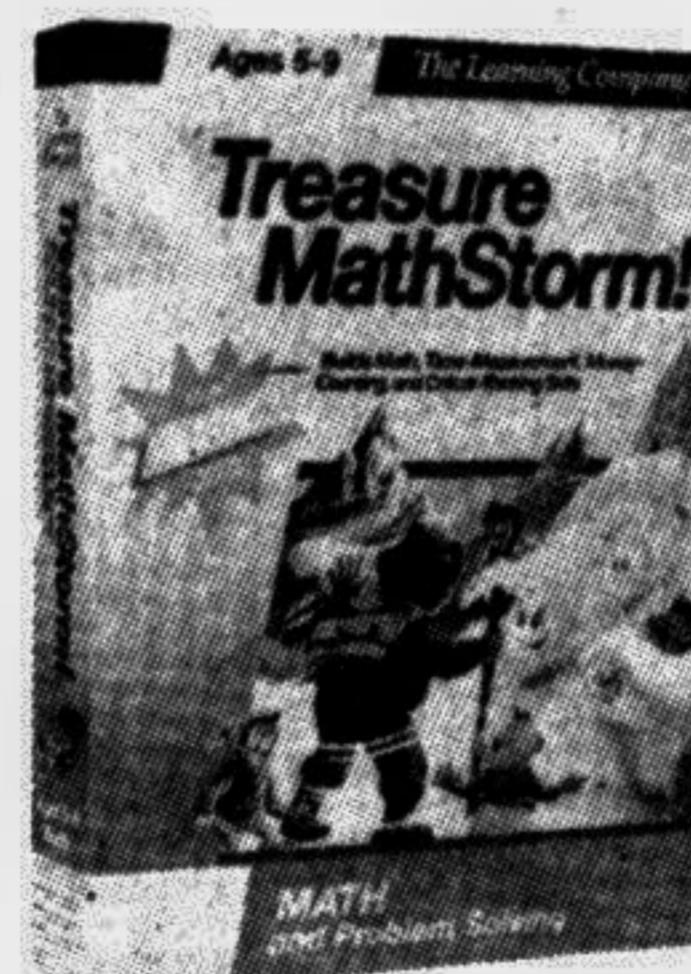
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Once Upon A Time

by Udita

I must have been
A long time now
Almost in another life
In another space of time
Looking back
The horizon seems
Beyond the grasp of
imagination.
Those wonderful times
Are gone
When
Life in the arms of childhood
Was
A sky full of stars
A beautiful dream
A lazy summer
Spent on the golden stretches
of sand
It all seems far away now
Like it happened
Once upon a time....

Hide and seek

by Udita

T HEY say
For love to alight upon you
So I sit in vain
With a deep longing in my
heart.
To encounter
This elusive being
Called love.
I think I can see
It sometimes
Dancing freely among
The golden corns or
Flying up in the sky
Sometimes fluttering into the
butterfly.
Or splashing in the shimmering
lake.
With fearful glances
I stand upon this
Ethereal creature
Unable to go near.
Afraid that it may disappear
And never return.

Music

by Faiza F Khan

9 years (USA)
When something you hear
Catches your ear
In a nice way
What is it?
When a bird sings
or a bell rings
what is it?
When a song is sung
And a string is strung
what is it?
It's all music.

Toys

by Faiza F Khan

I like toys
Everybody likes them
Girls and boys.
I like my doll
I take it everywhere I go
Even to a fancy hall.
My blanki is yellow
Just like a bowl of jello.
Toys, toys everywhere
Wherever you look
They are still there.

A Futile Experiment

by ASM Nurunnabi



M INTU a lad of ten, is curious about anything and everything. However his such curiosity craze does not always play a positive role in his life.

However, this upset the supporters of Joy Bangla.

They supported non-cooperative action and wanted everything to shut down until West Pakistan granted us our independence.

To show their anger, they started a lot of guerrilla warfare.

One of the places they attacked was Baitul Mukarram, the area where Abba worked.

One day, I was sitting on the patio playing Parcheesi with Tarek, Kamal Bhai, and Amma. As usual, we had the radio turned on. The familiar drone of the broadcaster was disturbed by the booming voice of another announcer.

This is a special announcement.

Baitul Mukarram is under siege by the Mukti Bahini.

The area has

become a war zone.

Nobody is

allowed to enter the area.

and those who are already

there are advised to stay in a safe, well-hidden area."

A chill ran down my spine.

Did they say Baitul Mukarram

had become a war zone?

Abba

was

he

alright?

Without saying a word, Amma went up to her room and started praying.

Tarek, Kamal Bhai, and I did

the same.

However, I prayed

downstairs so I would be able

to tell if my father had come

back.

Around six o'clock, I

heard the gate open. I turned

my head and saw that my fa-

ther had come back home.

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