



# Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW



## Apps You Need To See



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★ Donotes an "Editor's Choice."

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Welcome to the 161st Issue of *Children's Technology Review*, featuring 41 reviews, my comments about some letters to the FTC, a new app/toy viral strategy, a fight over some Hexbug fish and some practical back to school technology advice. Here's what you need to know for this month:

### Back to School Tech Tips: A Little Help From My Friends

In preparation for a NYTimes Back to School article, I put out a request for technology suggestions. I didn't have room for everyone's suggestions in the article, so I'm listing them here. The number one back to school necessity for 2013 is, as you might expect, reliable Internet access along with a laptop or some other device to serve as a portal. Here are some other suggestions; thanks to everyone who responded.

- Neal Hoskins: pick up an eReader (e.g., an old Kindle or fire-sale Nook) for distraction free reading, almost smash proof and carry a library in your backpack, plus no charger needed for weeks on end.
- Robin Raskin: Life360 is a virtual private network that can show you where your kids are at all times... can be useful with kids out all over the place. Pad and Paper: start your research away from the computer and map out what you're looking for. It'll keep you on focus. Study sessions with friends on Google Hangouts.
- Gail Lovely, in response to my suggestion about having a charging station near a child's bed so they could charge their phone/alarm clock as they sleep, wisely added "have a family charging station away from the child's bedroom so they don't text into the wee hours of the night."
- Barbara Chamberlin: What about time to think about learning with apps. Rather than being too concerned about 'screen time' group all of your math apps on a swipe screen, and have your learner spend 30 minutes each night playing his or her favorite math app, teaching them to learn how to make judgements about quality, encouraging exploration, and modeling educational 'play'. Also great for reading apps, or creative apps (spend 30 minutes with one of these 'creating' something). That time often expands as kids who - though normally playing Angry Birds space non stop - discover how much fun one of these 'other' apps is).
- Tom Farmer: Smartphone cover/charger. When phone bat is low, flip the switch and it charges the phone in 15 mins. Kids can't tell mom "didn't get your message... low battery."
- Ren Baldwin: Cozi family calendar app is great.

Thanks to all who contributed ideas. Happy back to school.

### Something fishy about the new Hexbug Aquabot

As a reviewer I sometimes notice similarities between competitive products. How many sling-shot type of game apps were there before Angry Birds? When I reviewed Robo Fish by Zuru last year (CTR October 2012) I recall thinking that it seemed like the type of product that Innovation First (the Hexbug folks) would make. I've since learned what was going on. According to Innovation First's law

*Continued on page 6*

### Save the Date —

### The 13th Annual Dust or Magic

### Institute, To Be Held Nov 3-5, 2013 in Lambertville, NJ

The main meetings will be held in the original location, in the Riverside Room at the Inn at Lambertville Station. Seats cost \$1480 for one seat, \$990 for 2 to 5. Visit <http://dustormagic.com> to register.



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# Exotic Cars



Bright, flashy colors, speed and luxurious interiors...you might see one on TV or zooming down the highway next to you. They are exotic cars. Read more to find out all about these interesting vehicles.

**1. How do you define an exotic car?** At The Examiner, <http://exm.nr/14M5LHo> you learn that it's not just the speed or look of a car that truly makes it exotic. It must have historical value.

**2. What is the most valued car?** At <http://bit.ly/13ZP0pr> you learn that actor James Coburn's 1961 Ferrari 250GT Spyder (pictured above) topped the list when it sold for \$10.9 million. Here's more on exotic car prices <http://bit.ly/1eKlzZZ>

**3. Which is faster, a Bugatti Veyron or a Lamborghini Aventador?** At The Supercars <http://bit.ly/1bwm5ej> you can learn that a Bugatti Veyron Super Sport can go from 0-60 in 2.4 secs; a lot faster than the Lamborghini Aventador. But both accelerate slower than a cheetah. See <http://bit.ly/14z1bVS>

**4. What country produces the most exotic cars?** At <http://bit.ly/14d5DdI> you learn that one country claims ownership rights to Alfa Romeo, Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati: Italy. Even though the Bugatti is produced in France, it was created by an Italian. See <http://bit.ly/15FzQ4D>

**5. I want one. How much \$?** At <http://nydn.us/1bwq6zy> you learn that the price of one Lamborghini Veneno is \$3.9 million. That's the same as 150 Ford Fusion Hybrids.



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## RIGHT TO THE SOURCE Here are the homepages for 11 Exotic car makers.

**Alfa Romero**  
<http://www.alfaromeo.com>

**Audi**  
<http://www.audiusa.com>

**Bugatti**  
<http://www.bugatti.com>

**Corvette**  
<http://www.corvette.com>

**Ferrari**  
<http://www.ferrari.com>

**Lamborghini**  
<http://www.lamborghini.com>

**Maserati**  
<http://www.maserati.us>

**McLaren**  
<http://www.mclaren.com>

**Mercedes Benz**  
<http://www.mbusa.com>

**Porche**  
<http://www.porsche.com>

**Tesla**  
<http://www.teslamotors.com/>



## Exotic Car Videos

Here's our YouTube playlist for this month

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwmku2mqFywFgCVTZEb2Fnm->





# Aug '13 Editor's Choice

Here are summaries of the 14 highest rated products from this month's batch of 41 reviews.

## Animation

**Easy Studio - Animate with Shapes!**, \$3.99, by Les Trois Elles Interactive

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id593847174?mt=8> helps children discover how animation works by way of a nice tutorial; plus sets of objects that can be dragged and dropped into place on the screen. Ages 6-up.

**Disney Animated**, \$13.99, by Touch Press

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/disney-animated/id632312737?mt=8> turns your iPad into a museum of animation, complete with tutorials and examples. This is a big download -- over 1.7 GB, and while most Disney productions are famously mass market, this app is not. If you are interested in animation. For ages 10-up.

## eBooks

**Grimm's Sleeping Beauty: A 3D Popup Book**, \$4.99, by StoryToys

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/id568368779?mt=8&stw> puts 35 story-related puzzles on a 3D stage. It's an excellent addition to any preschool or early elementary app library. For ages 3-6.

**Ironman: Armored Avenger**, \$1.99, by Disney Publishing Worldwide <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/iron-man-armored-avenger/id584254246?mt=8> is a well designed 29 screen interactive Marvel storybook that features an excellent mix of things to do and things to read. The good vs. evil story pulls kids in; and the narration by Comic Book legend Stan Lee has a dramatic tone to it. For ages 4-7.

**Pigeon Presents Mo on the Go!**, \$3.99, by Disney Publishing Worldwide <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pigeon-presents-mo-on-go/id593697686?mt=8> is a more bite-sized Mo Willam's first app "Don't Let the Pigeon Run this App." The five activities offers plenty of silliness, good big band music and variety with an underlying creativity theme. This is a noisy app, and it's a big download (905 MB) but there's a nice variety, and the underlying creativity options are good for children. For ages 4-up.

## Geography Facts

**50 States With Flat Stanley**, \$1.99, by Flatter World Inc. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/learn-states-flat-stanley/id632991688?mt=8> ranks up there with the best geography quizzes, due to a slingshot that you use to shoot the states onto a map; something familiar to anyone who has played Angry Birds. Ages 5-up.

**Ace Geographer: Canada**, \$3.99, by HB Studios Multimedia Ltd. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ace-geographer-canada/id624673884?ls=1&mt=8> features a clean mastery learning design. You quickly learn the Canadian Provinces and

Territories; along with flags, capital cities, flowers and official birds. For ages 10-up.

## Mathematics

**Moose Math**, \$2.99, by Duck Duck Moose Design <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/moose-math-by-duck-duck-moose/id660345152?mt=8> marks the 17th app from DDM, and the first since their major business expansion. We were pleased to discover the solid counting, sorting and classifying games; each 100% flashcard free. An added bonus -- you can keep an individual student profile for every member of your class. Not a bad deal for a \$3 app. For ages 5-8 (K-3)

**DragonBox Algebra**, \$5.99, by WeWantToKnow AS

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/dragonbox-algebra/id522069155?mt=8> turns simple algebra equations into a card game. The idea is to let children construct the key concepts behind variables and balancing equations. The more you play, the harder the challenge; just like Angry Birds. More advanced topics in algebra such as parentheses, fractions, and factorization are covered in DragonBox Algebra 12+. For ages 5-12.

**Questimate! - Pro**, \$8.49, by Motion Math Games

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/questimate!-pro/id681378925?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D2> is a timed, social estimation game (think words with friends, with comparison-type estimation problems). A free trial version is also available. The task of estimating has loads of educational validity, and this app, while not perfect, is good for the job. Ages 9-up.

## Music

**eMedia Singing Method**, \$60, by eMedia Music Corp. could be an excellent supplement to singing lessons, providing your Mac or Windows computer has a DVD-ROM drive, plus an Internet connection for online activation. The no-gimmick menu system makes it easy to jump directly to one of 230 lessons; and your computer's microphone is used to give you pitch feedback. If you are a vocal coach or teach singing lessons, this is a good tool to know about. For ages 10-up.

## Video Games (remember those?)

**Disney Planes**, \$50, by Disney Interactive, Inc. is fun, fast paced and easy to play, and it turns your Wii or Wii U into a one or two player (split screen) flying sim, with drop-in/drop-out co-op play. Prices are \$50 for the Wii U, \$40 for the Wii and 3DS, and \$30 for the DS version. For ages 5-up.

**Game & Wario**, \$40, by Nintendo of America is fast, fun and great for a small group to play together, as long as you have a Wii U GamePad. There's a nice variety of short, innovative games. For ages 7-up.

## Utilities

**StoryBots Beep & Boop iPhone App**, \$free, by JibJab Media Inc. <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/beep-boop/id510506893?mt=8> turns your iPhone into an extrinsic reward management system, where you can track the good or bad behaviors of any child. This is a useful utility for parents to know about. The app is free, but it also harvests your email information. For ages 3-up.

# Should App Ads be Regulated?

**A Response to the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood's FCC Complaints** By Warren Buckleitner

The Campaign for Commercial Free Childhood (CCFC) has struck a nerve by sending complaints to the FTC, charging the makers of apps for babies with false advertising. I was asked by several news outlets for my opinion, including this set of six questions from Bloomberg news. If I was teaching a college class, I'd ask each of my students to come up with their own answers. Because this issue is hard to reduce to sound bites, here are the answers beyond "these charges are silly."

**1. ARE THE CCFC COMPLAINTS LEGITIMATE?** I'm an educator and not a lawyer. But when I looked at the legal briefs, I was bothered by the faulty logic. Let me be specific. Playing up the educational merits of a toy, book or an app goes back forever (remember "Hooked on Phonics?") and there's no shortage of bigger examples. So if the FTC were to take some sort of action, they'd be pretty busy. Also, there's little or no "consumer risk" with a free app, and the language used to market the apps seems tame. The publishers imply learning outcomes, but they don't guarantee them. We're not talking about pharmaceuticals or high chairs, so I'm doubtful this is an issue worth government action. That's not to say that CCFC's premise is wrong. Publishers should not carelessly market. Like the CCFC, I cringe when two words like "baby" and "Einstein" are mashed together, especially under a Disney label. But I was hoping the CCFC would use their advocacy bullhorn to highlight some of the real problems in children's apps; such as nefarious in-app sales techniques that tease a young child with greyed out icons of fun things, or trick them into a "like." Some of the techniques being used are downright sneaky. Don't believe me? See Animal Train <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zd3wpCfSc0>. I also like the message that the CCFC charges sends to any publisher -- to think twice before inserting edu-speak into marketing. Instead of saying "Teaches your child to read" it is better to say "lets children play with early reading concepts." As David Kleeman of PlayScience has posted on Facebook, companies should publicize the research that goes into their products, instead of the promised outcomes that can't be measured. Market responsibly when the young are involved.

**2. DOESN'T ALL MARKETING INFLATE REALITY?** A parent and a child strolling together through Times Square is going to be bombarded by thousands of inflated commercial messages. App stores are also commercial spaces, where marketing thrives. The CCFC's view of commercial spaces is unrealistic. Our world isn't gender-neutral, and cats can make you sneeze. Most knives don't have dull edges. Most of us must raise our children in a messy, free, highly competitive culture where there's a Burger King across from every McDonalds. Rather than hiding our kids from these forces, adults must act as guides, so they can learn to separate the spin from reality. It's a new literacy.

**3. COULD THESE APPS BE DETRIMENTAL TO VERY YOUNG CHILDREN?** Ask five experts and you'll get five different answers. I say as long as they're used in balance, with support, and your child grows up with a healthy mix of real and concrete experiences mixed with the apps, you don't have anything to worry about. I'm still astounded whenever I hear a well-intentioned pediatrician use a blanket phrase like "no screens under age 2." That's throwing the baby out with the

bathwater, and I certainly hope pediatricians are using antibiotics with more wisdom. Let me make it simple. Parents who were raised in the QWERTY keyboard age are now bringing up tablet age children. This tablet can be a sketchpad or workbook; a camera or a picture book; a video editor or a million channel TV. It can also be a mindless arcade, pornography, or a poorly designed workbook with sneaky in-app sales. Some of these experiences are good developmental matches for children; others aren't. It depends on the app, your child, and the match. It's time to switch the conversation from the hardware to the software.

*It's time to switch the conversation from the hardware to the software.*

**4. HAVE YOU REVIEWED THE APPS IN QUESTION?** Yes. They're not my favorites. They are highly causal (cause/effect) -- like a rattle or a busy box which is totally harmless. So a child can explore sounds and symbols. For this stage I like apps where the child drives the activity. I'd avoid the Open Solutions apps. They are low rate flashcards that are designed to present slide-show loops to fill a child's head with knowledge. This bad top-down pedagogy is combined with in-app sales, too. There are better ways to use an iPad with a toddler. See, for example, the Sago Sago or Duck Duck Moose options.

**5. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CCFC?** It is rare to find voices in this debate that are not afraid to stand up to corporations, and for this, I admire them. But I get upset when I see such sloppy writing in a research-based document. I always think "children deserve better." Whenever valid research is wrapped in emotional language it erodes the credibility. I'm referring to words like "dopamine" or "changing brains" which are designed to sound scary. Parents don't need this type of stress when they have to deal with diaper rashes and teething. Susan Linn says "time with screens is linked to sleep disturbance, it's linked to doing less well in school." I want to know what type of screens? What apps? Where are your references? Until the CCFC can provide examples, stop the verbiage.

**6. ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO ADD?** Remember three words: access, balance and support, or ABS. Each was distilled from the NAEYC Fred Rogers position statement on technology and young children. Provide access to a variety of high quality screens, but in balance and with your support. These aren't necessarily sexy ideas, and the support part -- that involves bedtime stories and walks in the park, is easier said than done. We'll all agree on one thing. Parenting isn't an easy task. It wasn't 100 years ago, and it won't be 100 years from now.

Continued from page 2

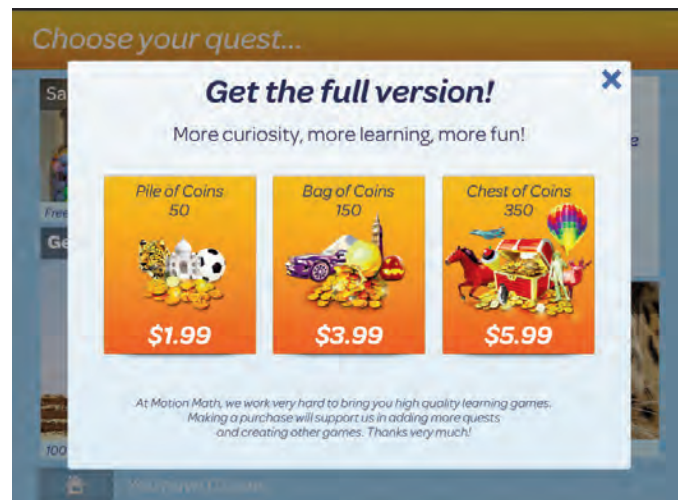
firm, a Chinese-based Innovation First employee defected to another company called Zuru with trade secrets. The conflict has been resolved, although you'll still see both brands of fish in some catalogs. It appears that the lawyers have done their work, some money was passed, and the fish can swim once again. One can't help but note the name of Innovation First's law firm: Fish & Richardson. More details with a comparison video, at <http://childrenstech.com/blog/archives/12178>



### Apps as Freebies: It's as American as Apple Pie

I recently received a pitch promoting a free coloring book app called Epic Coloring & Storybook Builder from Fox Home Entertainment. Reading the PR prose as a cultural anthropologist (who wouldn't?), I made some observations as I try to figure out how free apps will shape children's IM.

1. This is for sure -- there will be an increasing amount of free app content designed to be downloaded by children with or without their parent's knowledge.
2. Most kids 10 and older have their iTunes password. In our Summer programming class, 8 of the 13 kids own iOS devices. Every one (100%) knows their password, and downloads free apps.
3. Quality will vary; but some free apps are actually pretty good.
4. Consumers and kids are getting used to using the idea of download codes and seeing value in such practice. They're correct.
5. This practice could not have existed a few years ago.
6. These apps compete with paid content; bad news for anyone with a paid coloring book.
7. This practice is what happens when capitalism meets an app store psychology/reality.
8. Children and parents will have more digital clutter, and will need to develop a new set of "apps as freebies" skills, as part of being literate.
9. Capitalism is how the United States functions. Free samples work, and they aren't going away. It's as American as Apple Pie. Read more at <http://childrenstech.com/blog/archives/12327>



### Why Furby Boom is Like a Virus (and Why You Should Care)

The 2013 edition of Furby, called Furby Boom (\$65, [www.hasbro.com](http://www.hasbro.com)) uses a new interesting social transmission type of play strategy that uses a free app and egg trading. The play patterns are tried-and-true, and they depend on the proliferation of children's mobile devices, which serve as the carriers for Furby eggs. Five — or even two years ago, such a toy couldn't exist. It's like a "virus," because so many children have smart phones on which they can be "infected" with the eggs (Pew says 47% as of last year). Hasbro's objective is to sell more, obviously, or "infect" as many



young customers as possible. If you have one Furby, it's more fun to have two, and if your friend has one, they can have an egg together. That egg can be traded on an iPod Touch on the playground or bus. Think of your mobile device as a Furby DNA carrier, or a conduit to connect what used to be an isolated Furby individual to the larger society. Ready or not, here come another layer of sophistication in how toys use connected technology. Boom. I'm not saying this is good or bad; but I am saying that every adult should understand it. Here's a video with Kris Paulson, Furby's Lead Designer, about how Furby works. <http://youtu.be/d0cx-VM9jIc>

### Coming in September

The next generation of children's tablets and app-driven toys are arriving in Mediatech (where I test products). As you're reading this, we're seeing if testing Vivitar's XO Tablet to see if it lives up to Nicholas Negropontes dream.





# Feature Reviews

AUGUST 2013

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.

## 50 States With Flat Stanley

We've reviewed dozens of USA geography quizzes over the years, and this one ranks up there with the best, due to a slingshot that is used to enter your answers—play pattern familiar to anyone who has played Angry Birds.

You are presented with a challenge, like "send me to Wisconsin" along with an outline map and a slingshot holding Flat Stanley. Using your finger as a pointer to aim, you shoot Stanley to the state, aided by a laser pointer which is especially handy for those small Northeastern states. If you miss, you're shown the correct answer. Correct answers ask you to spell the name of the state, in a mini-crossword puzzle game. You can solve each region of the country, or try for all 50 states at once. Your scores are recorded on the main menu. The format can get a bit repetitious, and there could be more audio assistance. Also you can't control the repetitive music in the main menu. But these are minor points. All in all, this is a solid app for practicing the names and locations of the 50 US states.

Details: Flatter World Inc., [www.flatterworld.com](http://www.flatterworld.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Geography facts, 50 USA states, spelling. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 1/30/2013. [WB]

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



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



## Ace Geographer: Canada

Featuring a clean design based on mastery learning, this iOS app is designed to help you learn your Canadian Provinces and Territories by way of puzzles that ask you to match countries with flags, capital cities, flowers, official birds and so on by dragging and dropping each item onto a map.

There are six puzzle categories, each with a Trivia & Time Trial mode, collectable badges, and more than 150 facts about Canada. Game progress can be bookmarked under three profiles, or you can play as a guest. If you're looking for a solid quiz on Canada, this is a good choice.

Details: HB Studios Multimedia Ltd., [www.hb-studios.com](http://www.hb-studios.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad (iOS version 4.3 or later). Teaches/Purpose: Canadian facts and geography. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 5/28/2013. [WB]



### All My Love (For You)

Featuring beautiful pen and ink artwork by Dominique Maes and limited interactivity, this app consists of 18 detailed one color illustrations, all based on a love theme. The narrative is rather sappy (according to our testers) and the narrator has a sleepy voice that fits the theme of the app. Interactivity is limited but clever and nicely subtle -- you touch parts of each illustration to uncover colored elements. From an illustration point of view, this app is especially noteworthy.

Details: CotCotCot-apps.com , <http://CotCotCot-apps.com>. Price: \$5.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: IOS-Apple, iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 1/30/2013. [WB]

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



### Baby First Puzzle Farm Lite

This is a crudely designed drag-and-drop puzzle that asks children to find the matching outline for farm items. With the free version, every 9th problem brings up an prompt asking children to buy the full version for \$.99. It is a poster child for both bad design and bad business practice.

We also noticed some content inaccuracies -- A wheelbarrow is called a "barrow" and a jet airplane is called a "fighter." The depictions of the farm animals are of low quality, while the machines are more realistic. A watch me mode puts the app in slide show mode, in which a large hand automatically takes over the problems, creating a frustrating situation where you're competing for control with the built in hand. The reinforcements, consisting of applause and fireworks, have nothing to do with the concepts or language being presented. Even at \$free, this is not a good deal. Note that this app was one of the baby apps targeted by the Campaign for Commercial Free Childhood for false marketing. We'd agree with the CCFC that this is not a good way for babies to spend time, for quality reasons.

Details: Open Solutions, [www.babykidszone.com/](http://www.babykidszone.com/). Price: \$free. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: vocabulary, cause and effect. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 1.8 stars. Entry date: 8/12/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	36%
Educational	2	
Entertaining	3	
Design Features	3	
Good Value	2	



### Book of Holes, The

This off-the-beaten-path app illustrates concepts related to holes of all shapes, sizes and functions. Some of these include "the most mundane of bodily functions" so consider yourself warned. In one scene you see a dog pooping. The 24 screen eBook contains 100 interactive elements; and each screen shares a common element -- a hole of one form or another. The collage style illustrations are interesting to explore, and they are presented with sound effects by Zero Boy, who is know as a "human beat box and voice acrobat." There's a bit of a "sprinkled" feeling to this app -- not all the illustrations that look touchable actually are, and some of the screens take a few seconds or longer to load; hence the lower rating. There are two modes: a read to yourself and a listen to the narration, plus an index feature for navigation and hints.

The app is based on Poul Lange's children's book with the same name. Testers noted "this is one weird app."

Details: Chocolate Factory Publishing, [www.chocfacpub.com](http://www.chocfacpub.com). Price: \$4.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, collage. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 7/30/2013. [WB]

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







### Disney Animated

Turn your iPad into a museum of animation, complete with tutorials and examples, with this innovative non-fiction app from Touch Press (makers of War Horse, The Elements, The Orchestra and others).

For this app Touch Press worked with Disney to gain a rare insider's view of often hard to find examples from the Walt Disney collection, giving you a front row seat on the emergence of the animated arts -- from the hand drawn frames in Steamboat Willy in 1928, to the latest in computer graphics (CG) driven animation in Frozen, to be released Fall 2013.

Keep in mind: this app is not a collection of movies, or a set of animation tools, although there are some pretty clever hands-on simulations that let you experience how animation works. This is more like a hands-on museum of the history of animation, as told from a Disney point of view. Also note that this app is a big download (over 1.7 GB in size) and that it contains links to songs and movies that are for sale in the timeline.

You start by selecting one of the 11 chapters which are presented chronologically from the first screen. Each does a nice job of mixing text, still images, video clips and tutorials based on examples from 53 Disney films. Other content includes six interactive activities and a chapter from the book by former Disney animators called "The Illusion of Life" that illustrates the 12 Principles of Animation. Unlike in the print edition, many of the principles are shown using animated frames. You can also pull up different quotes from various Disney designers. There's also a timeline that tracks Disney's history, with background and previews of each movie; plus links to Disney songs for sale in iTunes. Despite this cataloging feature, it is clear that the motive of this app is to educate and not sell or overtly promote Disney products.

Noteworthy features include the ability to rotate artifacts, and four animation simulations that let you: (1) animate a character in 3D; (2) play with the emotions shown on a horse; (3) make a ball appear to bounce; and (4) trace a path for magic sparkles to appear in a night scene. All are based on real animation tools. Other "don't miss" features include footage of Walt Disney voicing Mickey Mouse, and a Color Map -- a graphic that compresses all the Disney animated features into one screen in order to show how colors have changed over the years.

While Disney productions are famously mass market, this app is not for everyone. If you are interested in animation or are a Walt Disney History aficionado, this app is a must download.

Details: Touch Press, [www.touchpress.com](http://www.touchpress.com). Price: \$13.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad, (1.7 GB). Teaches/Purpose: animation, creativity, visual arts, Disney history, computer graphics. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.9 stars. Entry date: 8/9/2013. [WB]

### Disney Planes

Fun, fast paced and easy to play, this one or two player flying simulation, based on the Disney animated film, takes players above the world of Cars for an adventure with four flying characters (Dusty, Echo, Bravo and Ishani). In terms of flying sims, there's not much that is innovative about this game, other than the entertaining characters.

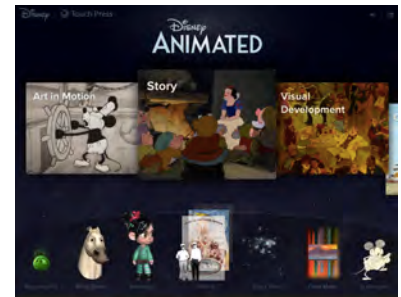
Content includes ten environments from the film, each with a set of challenges. After you finish the tutorial, you visit different environments, from Propwash Junction to China. In addition, there are four modes of play - Air Rallies, Story, Free Flight, and Balloon Popping; and single player or drop-in/drop-out two player co-op play with any of the characters featured in the game.

The handheld versions feature: six playable characters; six environments; 40 challenges and missions; four modes of play - Story, Challenge, Racing, and Balloon Popping; and single player gameplay as any of the characters featured in the game. Available exclusively on Nintendo platforms. Prices are \$50 for the Wii U, \$40 for the Wii and 3DS, and \$30 for the DS version. Developed by Behaviour Interactive (console) and Tose Company (handheld).

There are four languages, and three player profiles can be saved. The console version of the game lets you play as one of 10 characters from the film. Note that ratings apply to the Wii version.

Details: Disney Interactive, Inc., [www.disney.com](http://www.disney.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii U, Nintendo DS, Nintendo 3DS, Wii. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 6/12/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	98%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	



Ease of Use	9	90%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	





### DragonBox Algebra 5+

Note: See also DragonBox Algebra 12+, with harder challenges.

The first part of a two level algebra game, DragonBox Algebra 5+ is an iPad app that turns simple algebra equations into a card game.

The idea is to let children discover some of the key concepts behind variables and balancing equations. The game uses a mastery learning scoring mechanism, like Angry Birds, to present a series of progressively more challenging puzzles where you combine cards in order to balance equations. If you mix and match well, you earn more stars. The goal? "to secretly teach algebra." Progress is illustrated with the birth and growth of a dragon for each new chapter. The game was created by Patrick Marchal and Jean-Baptiste Huynh, the latter a high school teacher. You can toggle between 13 languages, and adjust the sound. There are social media links between levels (you can "like" your progress on Facebook).

So.. does this app successfully "gameify" algebra? Is there transfer to "real" algebra? These are questions that should and could be formally tested, however, there is no doubt that the app playfully presents a rule-based puzzle game and those rules are very similar to those used when balancing algebraic equations. It is also easy to jump back to a previously mastered level.

Concepts include equals sign, isolating variables, manipulating basic equations using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. More advanced topics in algebra such as parentheses, fractions, and factorization are covered in DragonBox Algebra 12+.

Details: WeWantToKnow AS, <http://wewanttoknow.com/>. Price: \$5.99. Ages: 5-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, logic, balancing equations, algebra, variables. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 5/2/2013. [WB]

### Easy Studio - Animate with Shapes!

Ideal for creating a setting where a child can discover the magic of animated images, this app combines a simple touch and drag interface with the animation tools and a nice tutorial; plus sets of objects that can be dragged and dropped into place on the screen.

A camera icon lets you capture each frame, one at a time. It is easy to tweak and adjust your project, preview and share if you like. There are two modes: Easy and Expert.

Strengths include a clear tutorial and the ability to easily scale, rotate or group objects -- features typically found in larger programs. We noticed that in the easy mode, the shapes don't always easily lock into place. Also there is no sound import ability or the ability to freely sketch. All in all, this is an excellent tool for getting children started with animation. The app contains no in-app purchases, advertising, links to social networks or personal data requests. Designed by by IP-3, developed by AKRIO ([www.akro.fr](http://www.akro.fr)).

Details: Les Trois Elles Interactive, <http://lestroiselles.com/en>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: animation, graphic arts. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 7/23/2013. [WB]

### eMedia Singing Method

Can't afford singing lessons? Now you can, as long as you have a Mac or Windows computer with a DVD-ROM drive, plus an Internet connection for online activation.

Like past eMedia music tutorials, this collection of vocal lessons is well constructed and the no-gimmick menu system makes it easy to jump directly to a specific lesson or set of lessons.

Content includes 230 lessons that start with the basics of singing technique, singing in time, and in tune. Next you learn how to project your voice, increase your range, vocal agility, expression, pitch and sight read from music.

If your computer has a microphone, you can get feedback on your pitch, to get objective feedback on your ability to match a melody. We especially liked how you can toggle on/off the accompaniment. The song library is varied, with 80 songs pulled from pop, folk, jazz, R&B, opera, classical and showtunes. Tutorials are given by way of 30 videos. If you are a vocal coach or teach singing lessons, this is a good tool to know about.

Details: eMedia Music Corp., [www.emediamusic.com](http://www.emediamusic.com). Price: \$60. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: singing, ear training. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 7/29/2013. [WB]

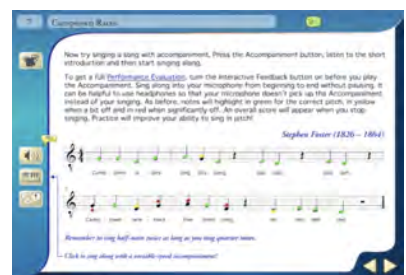
Ease of Use	7	86%	
Educational	10		
Entertaining	9		
Design Features	8		
Good Value	9		



Ease of Use	9	92%	
Educational	10		
Entertaining	9		
Design Features	8		
Good Value	10		



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






### Game & Wario

Fast, fun and great for a small group, Game & Wario is a collection of games designed specifically with the Wii U GamePad in mind. Games include Pirates (look left, right, and above to block arrows fired from a pirate ship using the GamePad as a shield), Gamer (play the classic WarioWare microgames on the GamePad, while keeping an eye out for mom on the main TV. When mom is close, a few quick button presses on GamePad will help players pretend they are asleep); Shutter (try to spot a list of targeted suspects or actors on the TV, then zoom in and take pictures using the Wii U GamePad as a camera); and Disco (holding one side of the GamePad, two players alternate tapping the touch screen to battle each other in a disco competition).

As you play, you can earn tokens that can be used in a chicken-themed machine called Cluck-a-Pop, which contains in-game prizes and microgames. Other features include Miiiverse Sketch where players try to draw words that have been suggested by others online. This feature only works if your Wii U is online.

Details: Nintendo of America, [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$40. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii U. Teaches/Purpose: problem solving, logic, spatial relations for 1 to 5 players. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 6/11/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	96%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	





### Grimm's Sleeping Beauty: A 3D Popup Book

Well designed and fun to play, this StoryToys' rendition of Sleeping Beauty contains 35 story-related puzzles to solve. As with other StoryToy titles, each page pops up as a 3D stage, presenting a set of props that let you play with the story elements. As you do, you solve problems that involve fine motor practice, using your memory and spatial relations as you dress-up fairies, find presents to give to the princess, solve 3D mazes, and listen to solve a musical memory puzzle.

Each page is narrated in your choice of English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Korean and simplified Chinese; which is one of the options found in the parent's menu. There was no in-app sales content in the \$4.99 app we reviewed, and promotional links are kept in the parent's menu. This is an excellent addition to any preschool or early elementary app library.

Details: StoryToys, [www.storytoys.com](http://www.storytoys.com). Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, spatial relations, memory, fine motor. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 10/26/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	94%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	





### Ironman: Armored Avenger

This well designed 29 screen interactive Marvel storybook features an excellent mix of things to do and things to read. The good vs. evil story pulls kids in; and the narration by Comic Book legend Stan Lee has a dramatic tone to it. At one point in the story, you take on the role of iron man, shooting lasers and using a guarding shield to defeat your enemy, the Mandarin and his ten rings of power.

You can choose from three Iron Man suits and three levels of difficulty in the minigame. You can also try to find all the hidden parts of Iron Man's armor throughout the story to create a final suit, and earn achievement badges by completing challenge. All in all, this is an excellent app, with easy to read text.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, [www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com](http://www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, timing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 3/6/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	90%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



"I have a feeling this is not the last I will see of the Mandarin," Iron Man said to himself.





### Jetpack Journeys

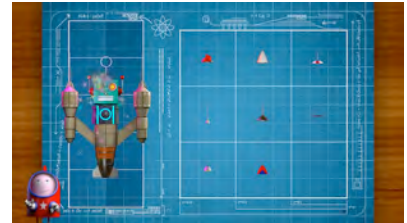
Jetpack Journeys is an open-ended flying simulation with no wrong answers. You become one of five astronauts and steer them around the screen using a compass to find each of the eight planets.

Children learn where Earth is in relation to the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune and learn to recognize the look of each planet. It is possible to build different rockets by mixing and matching parts. If you visit all of the planets you can collect all the spaceship parts or stars as you jetpack about with any of the five playable characters or jump straight into your Spaceship and launch into Outer Space.

Weaknesses include random background sounds that are not related to the screen activity, and some awkward flight mechanics. Still this is a fun idea, and we liked how easy it is to explore and make rockets.

Details: Inkology, [www.inkology.co.uk](http://www.inkology.co.uk). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, space travel, the solar system. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 8/8/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	76%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	7	



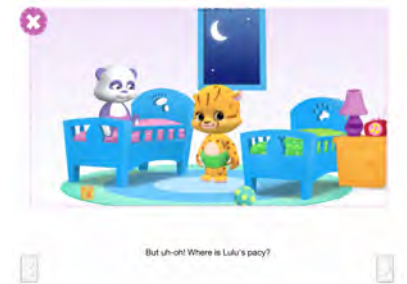
### Jim Henson's Chatter Zoo

Nice simple 3D graphics meet too much narration and a scripted design in this app designed for younger children (ages 2 to 4); based on the Jim Henson animated series called Chatter Zoo.

There are four baby animals: Franny the cheetah, Bailey the elephant, Pip the wallaby and Lulu the panda. Children feed the babies their favorite foods, or give them a bath based on colors and shapes. Other content includes two stories about a day in the life of the Chatter Zoo babies. Designed to support "vocabulary acquisition and early language building", the app also lets children teach the baby animals how to talk. Each part of the app focuses on a few key words that the characters use in every story and then repeat in a simple song at the end. This is a well intentioned app, but the design is too didactic. All external links are locked behind a parent menu.

Details: Mindshapes Limited, [www.mindshapes.com](http://www.mindshapes.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: causality, colors, shapes sounds. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3 stars. Entry date: 8/9/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	60%
Educational	6	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	5	



### Jo in Paris

Can't afford a trip to Paris? One of a planned series of interactive travel books, this is a collection of 44 headliner museum items and locations from around the city of Paris.

You start in Jo's homeroom, where you select either museums or the streets of Paris. Each is depicted as a side-scrolling scene with highlighted areas, marked with a question mark. Your touch, say, of the Eiffel Tower leads to a descriptive paragraph (which can be read aloud in synthesized speech). This also unlocks a multiple-choice quiz question about the item discovered. The overall design is dry, going no deeper than slides and text, and the transition between screens load slowly. The looping music can't be muted. Once you're in one of the areas to explore, the app is responsive and easy to explore. The watercolor illustrations are by Eglantine Bonettc. The site for the series is at [www.joandme.com](http://www.joandme.com). The bottom line? This design isn't flashy by any stretch and there's not much depth to this app. For an overview of the key artifacts and sites of Paris, however, the app does the job.

Details: Sikanmar Interactive, [www.sikanmar.com](http://www.sikanmar.com). Price: \$4.99. Ages: 6-14. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geography, Paris, history. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 7/2/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	76%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	8	





### Joy and Misty

Featuring an innovative navigation structure but less than impressive narration, Joy and Misty is the story of a girl offering to support her friend who was bullied at school.

Instead of a typical page flipping design, this app paints each page on a wall, letting you move around in a 3D space. To hear the narration, simply touch the wall.

The app uses Journey Champ's "Walk-in-Story" technique. Features include the ability to see yourself in the screen, using your tablet's camera. In terms of content, this app is weak; but the navigation technique is interesting. See also the Three Little Pigs.

Details: Journey Champ, [www.journeychamp.com](http://www.journeychamp.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, bullying. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.5 stars. Entry date: 8/8/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	70%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	7	



### King's Stilts, The

In terms of design, there's nothing new about the Oceanhouse Media treatment of this early 1939 Dr. Seuss story. There's the "Read to Me," "Read it Myself," and "Auto Play", with excellent scaffolding techniques that include picture/word association where the words zoom up and are spoken when pictures are touched. In addition, individual words highlight and are read aloud when tapped, with excellent audio narration and background audio. The pages pan & zoom to accentuate the original art of Dr. Seuss, which is perhaps the least impressive attribute of this work. You can also record your own voice and share voice tracks with others that own this app.

The story, called The King's Stilts, is written in prose rather than familiar Dr. Seuss verse, and is designed to show that play is just as important as hard work. In the story, King Birtram of Binn spends his days keeping a watchful on his kingdom, but after a long day of work the king is ready to play and races around the palace on a pair of red stilts. When the stilts are stolen, havoc breaks out in the kingdom and the king neglects his royal duties. When the stilts are finally returned, things get back to normal and the king finds a friend to share in his fun.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, [www.oceanhousemedia.com](http://www.oceanhousemedia.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: language, keeping life in balance. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 5/29/2013. [WB]

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





### Learn With Homer

Comprehensive technology reading based systems are as old as the dinosaurs, and IBM's Writing to Read. So what's new with this one? Two things -- it's tablet based and you start for free, with additional content sold as in-app sale. So any iPad 2 or better teacher, or say home schooler, can download the initial app to give it a test. They'll find a well constructed early reading experience consisting of individualized phonics instruction combined with high interest eBooks for reading practice. The idea is to give you the shell of an iPad delivered reading curriculum, with a few free teaser activities. Additional lessons and stories are available as in-app sales, which can be downloaded on the spot for \$1.99 each, providing you are OK with in-app sales.

You start by creating a profile for your child, then he or she logs in to visit four areas of an island labeled Learn to Read, Story Time, Discover the World, and Art Space.

Strengths include professional graphics with carefully constructed lessons plus the ability to keep an individual profile for each child. The lessons feel didactic and perhaps a bit sugary, but are based on tried-and-true phonics teaching methods and they include opportunities to record letter sounds using the iPad's microphone. Testers didn't care for the looping music at the start (mute button, please) and the first time content is downloaded it can take a few minutes. Some of the screens feel cluttered with high quality visuals that are non-interactive.

Thirty lessons are free (two Learn to Read levels and two Discover the World packs) and up to three children can use one account. Homer's Clubhouse is cloud based and includes storage for up to 500 recordings and drawings per child.

Details: Homer Learning, Inc., [www.homerapp.com](http://www.homerapp.com). Price: \$free, with in-app sales. Ages: 4-7. Platform: iPad 2 or better with Wi-Fi. Teaches/Purpose: reading skills and comprehension. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 7/19/2013. [WB]

### Lost Song, The - Living Stories

Discover beautiful music hidden under layers of graphics, in this third interactive book app from the Living Stories series from Ravensburger.

Some of the pages are less than responsive -- you don't know where to touch to make things happen. This leads to a lot of random screen tapping, as you try to find the musical hot spots. Our testers would accidentally exit the app when the iPad's multitasking gestures were turned on (these can be deactivated in the preferences).

In the 27 screen story, you visit the land of Silentium where music is forbidden and work is emphasized. After you discover an old violin, you awaken Mimi, who is sleeping inside the instrument. Together you bring back the music to the world. The art is well done, and the music weaves together nicely to contribute to a pleasant experience.

As you explore the pages, you can direct your own orchestra, composing music from items you find. Other options let you choose between five languages (only German and English are read out loud); and the app includes a digital edition of a Ravensburger puzzle on each page. Contains links to the app store under the "news" tap on the main menu.

Details: Ravensburger Digital GmbH, [www.ravensburger-games.com/en/](http://www.ravensburger-games.com/en/). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, music. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 7/30/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	10
Entertaining	7
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

84%



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

82%





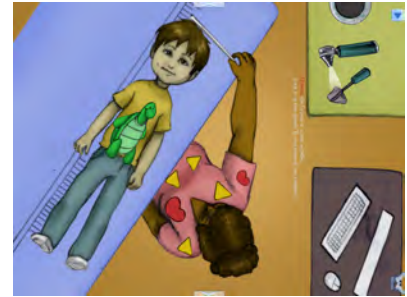
### Luca Lashes Visits the Doctor

Luca is a boy with magic eyelashes which give him special brave powers that help him with all his scary firsts. This is a good story idea and the illustrations are OK, but the interactive design limits the usefulness of the story. This app is part of a series designed to help children overcome their fear of firsts (first dentist, haircut, trip on an airplane and so on). This story consists of 15 screens, each with some hidden hot spots and narrated text that is highlighted. While this is a nice feature for emerging readers the font is so small that it is impossible to read on regular sized tablets. We suspect that the app was initially designed for small screens and never properly adapted for larger tablets. The app contains links to iTunes on the last page.

Features include the ability to toggle between English, Spanish, Chinese, French and Italian. The apps are available for \$1.99 and the accompanying eBooks are \$2.99. The series of iPad apps is available in Chinese, English, French, Italian and Spanish. We'll hope future titles will be better designed, easier to read and higher in child control.

Details: Luca Lashes LLC, [www.lucalashes.com](http://www.lucalashes.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 0-4. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: overcoming fears, reading, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 1.4 stars. Entry date: 7/24/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	6	28%
Educational	4	
Entertaining	1	
Design Features	1	
Good Value	2	



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



### Mini-U: The Farm

They say "creativity works well with structure." This app lets you create your own farm by dragging and dropping items from a straightforward collection of graphic elements that depict parts of buildings, farm scenes, farm machines, grazing goats and cows and so on. Content includes six farmers, seven animals (you can make flocks of them), 31 plants and five backgrounds. You can also use your own photos or pictures. The app gives you plenty of creative freedom, and the menus are responsive. It is easy to save and share your finished work. It is also possible to toggle off the background banjo music. Testers noted that the placement of the objects sometimes follows arbitrary rules -- certain objects cannot be placed on top of each other, but some can. Also the app sometimes doesn't recognize your finger, and there is no prompt to save work when you exit a scene. Finally there are no advanced editing options, like rotation/scaling.

The bottom line? This is a clean looking creativity playground that makes it fun to make and share scenes, but with fewer options/less flexibility and control than some similar apps. There is no advertising or in-app purchases.

Details: PopApp Factory, [www.popappfactory.com](http://www.popappfactory.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, construction, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 7/22/2013. [MJD]



### Moose Math

Teachers take note: App number 17 from Duck Duck Moose is designed specifically to cover early elementary (Kindergarten and First Grade) math by way of some solid counting, sorting and classifying games. Each game lets children playfully master skills that will provide an excellent foundation for later math learning, and the games are paired with an individualized record keeping system, that stores progress and profiles for each child. Math educators will appreciate the fact that this app is 100% flashcard free, yet still manages a good deal of leveled practice.

After they enter their name and make a profile, children choose one of five leveled activities. These include: Recipe Maker - read recipes for juice that involves adding up to 20; Pet Bingo has you adding and subtracting by 2's, 5's and 10's; Paint Pet has you matching pets by counting dots; Lost and Found asks you to sort and count shapes and colors; and finally, there's a well designed dot-to-dot puzzle with numbers that go up to 100.

Lighter moments are provided by a cast of animals called Dust Funnies. This app is based on a mastery learning model of curriculum, where you unlock harder levels the more you play. The better you do, the greater the challenge. The drawback to this model can be a rigid feel. While this app has a little bit of that, it is generally easy jump around between activities and the games are responsive.

Help and hints are provided by YaYa the bird. We were surprised to learn that this app can store an "unlimited" number of student profiles, meaning a teacher of 25 could have individual bookmarks and records for every child. Not a bad deal for a \$3 app. All of the data collection is kept behind the protected parents menu. The math curriculum was developed by former teacher Jennifer DiBriezna, a Standord Ph.D. See also Park Math and Fish School for well designed Duck Duck Moose titles.

Details: Duck Duck Moose Design, [www.duckduckmoose.com](http://www.duckduckmoose.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math operations, up to 20, counting, addition, subtraction. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 7/30/2013. [WB]

### Pigeon Presents...Mo on the Go!

More bite-sized than "Don't Let the Pigeon Run this App", this easy to use, fun collection of five activities offers plenty of silliness, good big band music and variety; all with an underlying creativity theme.

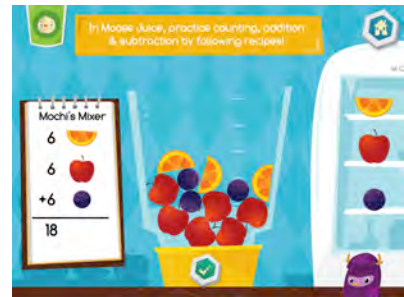
Each game features a Mo Willems character, or Mo himself, in a simple co-op drawing tutorial where one person starts a drawing and a second finishes it.

Other activities include Monster Maker (mix and match parts such as heads, bodies and legs of monsters), Dance-O-Rama (program musical routines with Piggie and Elephant), and Dream Drive (a timed maze game where you try to collect ducklings, while watching out for a mad cow). Sticker Pictures lets you use your iPad's camera to mix an actual photo with stickers that you either earn or draw. Prices are \$3.99 on iTunes and \$2.99 for Nook.

Need to know -- this is a noisy app, and it's a big download, weighing in at 905 MB. But there's a nice variety, and the underlying creativity options are good for children.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, [www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com](http://www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Nook. Teaches/Purpose: drawing, spatial relations, art, creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 7/19/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	96%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	



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







### Questimate! - Pro

"How many cans of soda would be as tall as a toaster?" "How many giraffes would be as tall as the Statue of Liberty?" These are the types of questions waiting for you in the paid (full) \$8 version of Questimate, a timed, social estimation game where you are presented with a variety of comparison-types of questions. Note that a free trial version is also available.

Think "Words With Friends" for estimation and you get an idea on how this works. The social part is handled by Apple's Game Center which requires an Internet connection and an Apple ID, or you can use the lower tech "pass and play" mode which is ideal for classrooms.

From an educational point of view, the task of estimating is incredibly valuable, and this app, while not perfect, is great for the job. You are presented with variety of comparison questions, such as "how fast is the world's fastest train?" or "in what year was the cell phone invented?" The questions are lumped into categories like Amazing Animals, Need for Speed, History of Awesome, and GeoOdyssey, and new question sets are continually added, as updates. In addition, you can win hints and power-ups to keep things interesting.

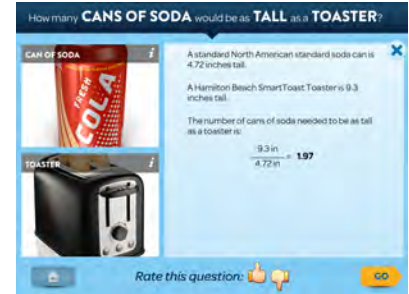
To play, you choose a topic and make your own question by choosing two variables to compare (e.g., "what's the speed of" and "a taxi at top speed." Answers are entered via a numerical keypad, a size visualizer or a timeline. Closer estimates earn higher scores, and these points unlock treasures for hints and power-ups. If your estimate is outside the rings you lose a life -- you must make it to the end of a Quest before your three lives are up.

Weaknesses to note included the inability to find another player in the social part of the game. You also have the option to invite your Game Center friends, as long as they also own the app.

Also many of the items -- like the size of a tortoise or the speed of a cab, can vary widely depending the the context. That's why the use of Wikipedia as a fact checking mechanism is helpful. Still, Wikipedia isn't always 100% accurate, and this variance can put you in a frustrating situation. All things considered, this is an excellent way for children or adults to start estimating together.

Details: Motion Math Games, [www.motionmathgames.com](http://www.motionmathgames.com). Price: \$8.49. Ages: 9-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: trivia, reading, logic, estimation, math, graphing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 8/6/2013. [WB]

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





## Roblox

Roblox is both an online community for kids ages 8-16 and a set of game generation tools. The Roblox site ([www.roblox.com](http://www.roblox.com)) contains a collection of home-made games that vary widely in quality. You can find platformers, RPGs (role playing games), FPSs (first person shooters), racing, and simulations. All use the same physics-based sandbox world and incorporate MMO conventions like Minecraft or Second Life. Players can also customize an avatar to represent them in the virtual world and socialize by chatting with other players and compiling friend lists.

The Roblox Studio is used to create games. Special events and scenarios can also be scripted using the Lua language, and a substantial amount of support is available online through the Roblox Wiki and YouTube tutorials.

Like many virtual worlds, the basic account and initial downloads are free, and you can do quite a bit as long as you register. But there's a velvet rope. Subscriptions to the Builder's Club can be purchased for access to various member benefits, and paid members can manage multiple game worlds, disable ads, create friend groups, and earn badges. Most notably, Builder's Club members have an advantage over free players in the economy.

The Roblox world revolves around a dual virtual currency, called Robux, that has hooks to real money. Robux lets you purchase items and avatar accessories, such as special hats that serve as status symbols and many other accessories, such faces, clothing and weapons. Some items are 'limited,' and players engage in bidding wars to profit from their rarity.

Only paid members earn Robux daily and can take part in the world's trading system. Robux also can be purchased in exchange for real-world money through microtransactions, and the rates are tailored to the advantage of Builder's Club members as well.

Parents will want to pay close attention to the somewhat convoluted policies regulating payments and account management. As of July 2013, the monthly rate for a basic membership is \$5.95, and 6-month, 12-month, and lifetime packages are also available for \$29.95, \$57.95, and \$199.95 respectively. There is also a Turbo Builders Club, as well as an Outrageous Builder's Club, which run at increased rates between \$11.95 and \$349.95, depending on the tier and duration selected. Monthly subscriptions can be canceled and will auto-renew, while other subscriptions cannot be canceled and will not renew automatically. Membership takes effect immediately, and accounts can be upgraded, or downgraded, with the exception of a Lifetime Turbo or Outrageous Builder's Club membership. If your account expires, you will not lose your data, such as Robux or purchased Gear, but all member benefits will cease.

Ease of use is the main weakness of the Roblox experience, both when playing the games and in the studio environment. This makes it difficult to achieve much finesse with gameplay, and there is a steep learning curve for new players. Additionally, while there is a lot that can be done, and plenty of documentation available, very little direction is given to new players and developers, who must dig around to become more informed. Finally, the requirement of a signup and downloading requirements serve as an annoyance, that may serve as a barrier to entry for some.

The most compelling aspect of Roblox is the ability to construct original game worlds, and this has great educational potential. The quality of what you can make, however, is mediocre. You aren't likely to become immersed in any of the games the way one might in Minecraft, and the overall ease-of-use and power one finds in Scratch is missing.

Overall, Roblox offers a broad experience that allows kids to play, create, and socialize all in one place. As such, it's hard to rate. We'd really give it two ratings: one for the creative aspect of Roblox Studio, the other for the rather lame play aspect of the online games. They both average out to <4 stars out of 5. If you are looking for fun, free-to-play web games, you may be better off looking elsewhere, but for creative kids interested in learning about making their own games, Roblox is a possibility.

Details: Roblox, [www.roblox.com](http://www.roblox.com). Price: \$free or xx per month. Ages: 8-16. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Web. Teaches/Purpose: math, programming, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 6/30/2011. [MJD]

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

78%





### Simms Taback Children's Book Collection

Five stories in one app include Safari Animals, City Animals, Who Said Moo?, Where is My Baby?, and Wiggle! Like an Octopus. The stories feature non-fiction cartoon renditions of popular animals, presenting adult and baby animal names, the different sounds and how they move. The stories are from the late illustrator Simms Taback and children's author Harriet Ziefert. They were brought to the touch screen by CJ Educations and Blue Apple Books.

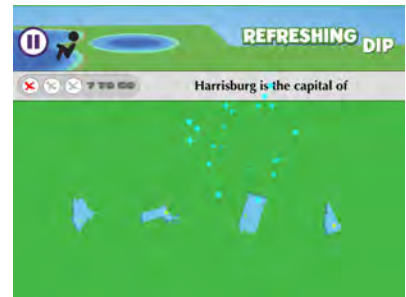
Other features include: Read to Me and Auto Play options; easy-to-read text with word highlighting designed to encourage beginning readers; narration with both child and adult voices; five original songs; song time; activities such as matching an animal with the correct sound it makes ; Read to Me text can be repeated by tapping the word; and music and narration can be turned off/on. The graphics are excellent but the interactivity is limited. There are no in-app purchases or ads.

Details: CJ Educations, [www.cjeducations.com/](http://www.cjeducations.com/). Price: \$6.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 4/1/2013. [WB]

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



Ease of Use	7	76%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	8	



### State Swipe

This app begins with a large, cartoon illustration of the United States and asks you to unlock new games and harder challenges by matching state outlines or playing concentration.

In State Swipe, you answer questions like "find New York" by swiping over the correct state before it falls off the screen. The graphics are blotchy, so it can be tricky to recognize the outline of the state which leads to guessing. Three wrong answers ends the game. In Karaoke Canyon, you sing along to the "Learning Our Capitals" song. Matching Mountain asks that you match flashcards under strict time limits; Memory Marshland is another concentration style game in which you match state name with outlines.

The app is designed to let you earn badges by matching state names, capitals, nicknames, abbreviations, regions and landmarks. Content includes 16 levels of State Swipe; 16 levels of matching states to facts in Matching Mountain; 16 levels of the classic memory card game in Memory Marshland; 350 factual cards in Flashcard Forest; and vocal and instrumental versions of "Learning Our Capitals" in Karaoke Canyon. Also available in a free lite version.

Details: Twin Sisters Productions, Inc., [www.twinsisters.com](http://www.twinsisters.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 4.3 or later), Android. Teaches/Purpose: geography, outlines of the 50 states. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 7/23/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	90%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	



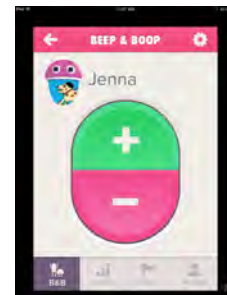
### StoryBots Beep & Boop iPhone App

This free app turns your iPhone into an extrinsic reward system, where you can track the good or bad behaviors of any child.

After you register (submitting your email) you create profiles for each child by taking a photo. You can then enter reasons for a beep, such as cleaning a room; and a boop, such as getting into an argument. It is possible to enter your own reasons although we couldn't figure out how to edit the score the app assigns to each behavior.

Strengths: The app is easy to use and edit, and it helps a child visualize their running score. Weakness include a forced registration (the app if free), and an inability to make your own sound effects. All in all, this is a useful utility for parents to know about.

Details: JibJab Media Inc., [www.jibjab.com](http://www.jibjab.com). Price: \$free. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: A tool for behavior management. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 10/8/2012. [WB]





## ZooPAL-A Gift: Learning Games for Preschool Kids

ZooPAL-A Gift: Learning Games for Preschool Kids is described as "a personalized, interactive story where your child is the hero and the adventure changes each time you open the book." You can download the first level for free; additional levels are sold as an in-app sale.

It's basically a page flipper with some interactive features, where you help the characters with simple matching or counting tasks. In this story, children help Hati, Matty and their zoo animal friends retrieve a mysterious box and rescue a new animal. As they play, the program adjusts in challenge level, delivering up to 160 different storylines. A parent mode lets you read along or get tips on how to extend the learning. External links and in-app sales (for more adventures) are protected behind a math equation.

Details: SmartyPal Inc., [www.smartypal.com](http://www.smartypal.com). Price: Free with In-App Sales. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad (550 MB). Teaches/Purpose: matching, counting . Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 8/7/2013. [WB]

<b>Ease of Use</b>	8
<b>Educational</b>	8
<b>Entertaining</b>	7
<b>Design Features</b>	8
<b>Good Value</b>	8

78%





# Future Releases & Updates

AUGUST 2013

*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.*

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## ClassDojo

Launched in 2012 with venture backing, ClassDojo is a behavior management solution for teachers. It makes it possible for teachers to reward good behavior with digital stickers, or give a child dings for bad behavior using a computer, tablet or smartphone.

The real time reports can be tracked by a parent. It consists of an app/web option, and is self described as a "growing behavioral education tool for K-12." It helps you keep track of PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports). It used to be that you get a check on the board. ClassDojo is currently free, but a freemium model is being considered down the road. It is funded by Imagine K-12, a venture group.

Details: ClassDojo, [www.classdojo.com](http://www.classdojo.com). Price: \$free. Ages: NA. Platform: iPad, Android, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: a behavioral management tool for teachers. Entry date: 8/9/2013.



## Fantasia: Music Evolved

Coming in 2014, Fantasia: Music Evolved was inspired by Disney's classic 1940 animated film Fantasia. It is being created by Harmonix Music Systems -- the makers of Rock Band.

The game combines video game play with a rhythm game -- a world where "music is magic." The experience takes the Microsoft Kinect Xbox motion control technology to another level, letting you become a DJ with your body movement. Songs will come from 25 + artists, including AVICII, Bruno Mars and Queen.

Harmonix Music Systems, Inc., based in Cambridge, MA, was established in 1995 by Alex Rigopulos and Eran Egozy, who formed the company to invent new ways for non-musicians to experience music. See the preview from E3 2013 at <http://youtu.be/UX2NG2lyuT0>

Details: Harmonix Music Systems, Inc., [www.harmonixmusic.com](http://www.harmonixmusic.com). Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Xbox One. Teaches/Purpose: music, creativity, rhythm, movement. Entry date: 6/10/2013.



## Fart Blaster

The Despicable Minion Fart Blaster gadget features sound effects, light and a perfumed banana scent. Press the trigger for fart sounds, effects, and color changing lights. You can also pump the stock a few times and then press the trigger to emit a banana scent with lights and fart sound effects.

The blaster also has a "joke mode" with a 20 second time delay fart sound. You can press and hold the trigger for a few seconds, then when the light chamber starts flashing in red and green, you release the trigger and the Joke Mode is activated. Place the Fart Blaster in a desired location (say, behind a chair) and after 20 seconds it will light up and make fart sounds automatically. Available only at Toys R Us. Requires 2 AAA batteries.

Details: Thinkway Toys, Inc., [www.thinkwaytoys.com](http://www.thinkwaytoys.com). Price: \$35. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: humor. Entry date: 7/22/2013.



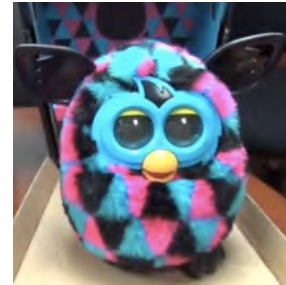


### Furby Boom

Furby Boom looks and acts a lot like last year's Furby, with the exception of some notched ears, cloth feet and your choice of six zany fur patterns. He (she?) is still powered by four AA batteries, and can still drive adults from any room. The 2013 edition of Furby (the second of the next generation) has a few noteworthy features. For the first time, you can turn it off (or put it to sleep) by holding its tail. Also, if you have the free Furby app, your Furby toy can have babies, that you can collect and care for. The app will run on either iPhones, iPads or Android devices.

To put your Furby to sleep, you pull his tail for a few seconds -- Furby yawns and goes to sleep. To lay an egg, you start the Furby app, and put your Furby within earshot of your tablet. The tablet and Furby communicate with each other using audio watermarking technology -- ultrasonic encoded "chirps" that Furby can send or receive. You can collect up to 50 eggs on your app, which encourages you to charge out to your toy store to buy another Furby.

Details: Hasbro, . Price: \$65. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: fun with language, memory, logic. Entry date: 7/16/2013.



### Galaxy Tab 2 10.1 Student Edition

This is the \$350 back to school bundle (available for Fall 2013 only) that includes an Android Tablet, keyboard and docking station. The tablet is a Galaxy Tab 2 10.1 that comes with Google Play (and all the apps it represents), Polaris Office and one year of 50GB Dropbox storage, plus a trial to Hulu Plus. The Desktop Dock accessory charges the tablet while working or playing, and the Bluetooth Keyboard makes the package more laptop-like. Visit [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com).

Details: Samsung, [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com). Price: \$350. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: a hardware bundle for students. Entry date: 7/25/2013.



### Hexbug Aquabot

About the size of a bass lure, these self-propelled robotic fish look just like Robo Fish; which were developed in New Zealand (<http://amzn.to/13ft2cH>). Each fish is powered by two button-cell batteries (included). The silicon rubbery tails can be pulled off and swapped on different fish. The tail motion is randomized by a small internal computer, which provides a lifelike swimming motion to the fish. There is no on or off switch. Instead, you touch each side of the fish, on two capacitive sensors if you want the fish to swim out of water. The sensors also can be triggered by water; which is why the fish is only on when the fish is wet.

Available in five colors and made from translucent plastic so you can see the inner workings, a design element meant "to get kids thinking about the science." For \$5 extra, you can get the plastic fishbowl.

Details: Innovation First, Inc., [www.hexbug.com](http://www.hexbug.com). Price: \$10. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: a robotic toy for water play. Entry date: 7/13/2013.



### InnoTab 3S

InnoTab 3S (\$100, [www.vtechkids.com](http://www.vtechkids.com)), like last year's 2S, comes with built in Wi-Fi, rechargeable batteries plus the ability to run older cartridges sold at \$25 each. The screen size and processor is the same, but the RAM has been doubled. This year's edition promised more connected options, including a walled off chat option where you can send or receive messages from mom or dad's smart phone. Note that an app must be installed on the parent's phone in order to make it work. Other features include: Wonder Cam & Video Recorder - create funny faces and photo frames, fantasy effects and kaleidoscope creations with more than 55 effects; and E-Reader with Story Dictionary - read interactive ebooks and learn meaning of words with built-in story dictionary.

Apps included: Art Studio, calendar, clock, friends list, My Magic Beanstalk Game, Notes, Calculator, games.

Details: VTech Electronics North America, [www.vtechkids.com](http://www.vtechkids.com). Price: \$100. Ages: 3-9. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: early learning. Entry date: 7/10/2013.





### Pete the Pencil

Here's another app featuring Journey Champ's "Walk-in-Story" reading technique. Pete The Pencil is a tale of a pencil encouraging his best friend, the sharpener, towards better self-esteem. See also Joy and Misty.

Details: Journey Champ, [www.journeychamp.com](http://www.journeychamp.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, self esteem. Entry date: 8/8/2013.



### Questimate!

This is the free trial version of Questimate. See Questimate Pro.

The free version contains only the Intro levels of the questions although it shows other levels on the main menu. Includes questions such as "how many jelly beans would be as long as a yoga mat?" and "how many T-Rexes would be as tall as the Eiffel Tower?" While it has all the sharing features, you are also prompted to buy bags of coins as in-app sales. Schools have the option of downloading the "pro" version at \$8 outright.

Details: Motion Math Games, [www.motionmathgames.com](http://www.motionmathgames.com). Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, estimation, reading, logic, trivia. Entry date: 6/25/2013.



### Speakaboos

Here's a free set of 36 narrated storybook-inspired videos and narrated slide shows, available either as a web site in Flash, or as an app in iTunes for iPad.

The initial download is free. Stories are generally high in quality but low in interactive features. Some are pure videos, or stories shown in slide show fashion. Titles include A Christmas Carol, Aladdin, Cinderella, Bunny Foo Foo and Goldilocks. The Three Little Pigs consisted of excellent narration and graphics, but it took a long time to load the first time, and the interactive features were crudely done. Fortunately it is easy to jump out and to visit another story. Because the topics deal with things like bugs, cars or outer space, it is likely children will find something they like.

Details: Speakaboos LLC, [www.speakaboos.com](http://www.speakaboos.com). Price: \$free. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, literacy. Entry date: 4/28/2010.



### Three Little Pigs - Walk in Story book

Here's another featuring Journey Champ's "Walk-in-Story" reading technique. See also Joy and Misty.

Details: Journey Champ, [www.journeychamp.com](http://www.journeychamp.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, spatial thinking. Entry date: 8/8/2013.

