

KOLLÁR KRISZTINA

GAMEBOOKS: GREAT READS APPLICATION

Title	Gamebooks: Great Reads
Developer	Renaissance 2.0 Media, Inc.
Contact information	https://gamebooks.secretbuilders.com/home/
Type of product	Gamified reading website and application
Platform	Web-based online platform. Mobile application for iOS requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. Requires Android 4.0 and up.
Price	5 books are available for free of charge. The full library can be purchased for \$5.99.

chase has to be made. This means that the number of users on a shared device is not limited, however, if the users of a device wish to read the books on another one, they need to repurchase the whole content for that particular device, as there is no sharing option.



Figure 2: Creating a user account and avatar

When the purchase and registration are done, the gamification experience via badges and leaderboards can begin. After tapping the 'PLAY' button on the home screen, the user will find the books being divided into fairy tales and classic books, called great books in the app. In both groups there are five categories. Each category informs the user about the level of the books contained in reference to the CEFR, the number of the headwords, average word count and the Lexile level range. In the information chart about the great books, the length is also added.



Figure 3: Information about the levels of the books

After selecting the book we want to read, the table of contents is presented first, and the male-narrator starts reading the book using some basic read-aloud techniques like different voices to personalize the characters or tone fluctuation to engage the readers and hold their attention. Although the read-aloud helps learners to master accurate pronunciation, the pace

INTRODUCTION

Today's reading experience is far more different compared to the last 15-20 years. We are not obliged to carry large and heavy books with ourselves anymore when going on a trip, to school, or when we wish to do pleasure reading. We do not need to wait in long queues in a bookshop to purchase a desired book, nor do we have to sign up for waiting lists to receive a notification when our book has been delivered. The whole process has been simplified since with a growing variety of reading applications and e-books available at our fingertips. We can indulge ourselves in the wide variety of books available online or in the application stores.

Although mobile devices have been less favored to be used over desktop PCs when completing learning tasks (Stockwell, 2010), they have been proved to enhance extensive reading (ER) experience. Mobile devices are claimed to develop language learners' language proficiency, are useful, easy to use, and satisfying (Lin, 2014). Therefore, implementing digital reading materials in language classrooms could highly contribute to language learning and teaching.

To provide the best ER experience for language learners is to bear in mind the following principles: (1) The reading material is easy, (2) a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available, (3) learners choose what they want to read, (4) learners read as much as possible, (5) the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding, (6) reading is its own reward, (7) reading speed is usually faster rather than slower, (8)

reading is individual and silent, (9) teachers orient and guide their students, (10) the teacher is a role model of a reader (Day & Bamford, 2002, pp. 137-140). *Gamebooks: Great Reads* meets all the aforementioned criteria to provide learners with appropriate reading materials and activities based on the readings.

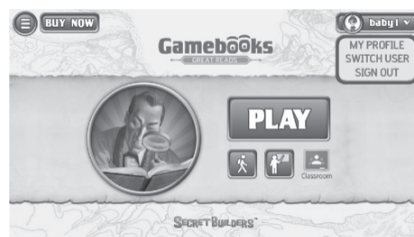


Figure 1: Gamebooks' home screen

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Gamebooks: Great Reads is a reading application created in the cooperation of Secretbuilders and the Oxford University Press from the Graded Readers series. The application is available in the *AppStore* for iOS and *GooglePlay* for Android devices along with web access. The app itself can be downloaded for free of charge; however, it gives access to very few books only. The whole library can be bought for a very reasonable price, that is 2190 HUF (\$5.99). It includes 119 fairy tales and classics like *The Shoemaker and the Elves*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Selfish Giant*, *White Fang* and many more.

PLAYER CONSOLE

To purchase the full library, user registration is required with a username and a password. It is important to know that for one device only one pur-

can be a bit too slow for some of them; therefore it can be muted. When the reading is finished, the application offers the opportunity to either play the games or go back to the books.

There are different kind of interactive games and quizzes which test students' understanding of the story, the vocabulary they have learnt, and the spelling of the words. After reading an ebook, they unlock the games at the end of the book or chapter. These tasks have to be solved within the given five-minute time frame. The activities include hidden object games where students have to find the listed objects on the picture by tapping on them, or name the picture puzzle game when there is a picture covered with question mark tiles and each of them reveals part of the searched word. The description of the solution is given, but if one fails the spelling, there is no chance for a correction - that particular task has to be started again. Another type of the activity is a hangman word puzzle in which students have to find out a described word. The more they fail in the spelling of the word the faster the hangman will appear, and they have to start the game from the beginning. The games end with a multiple choice final quiz containing ten questions. The final quiz is offered after all the games have been completed. After finishing the quiz, the reached score is displayed, and the reader can decide to move on to the next book or replay the games to gain a higher score and move up on the leaderboard.

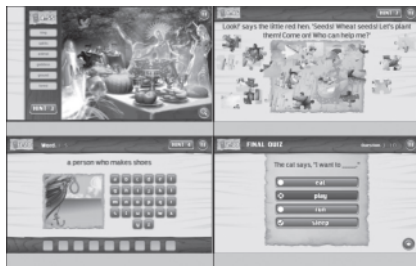


Figure 4: Post-reading activities and games

Each *Great books'* title page gives a concise summary of the writer's life and lists his most famous literary works. Since these books are more difficult and longer readings, they prepare the reader with the pre-reading activities. These tasks help readers to get familiar with the characters and to predict what will happen in the story. Understanding is checked with the

help of the while-reading activities after each chapter. These also help to recall the happenings from the previous chapters, if one does not intend to read the whole text in one go. The tasks come in various forms like choosing the right words to finish the sentences, finding words from the book in a word chain, correcting the mistakes in a chapter summary, predicting what will happen in the following chapter and many more. On each page, there is a short glossary of new words with their English explanation. These words are highlighted in the text as well.

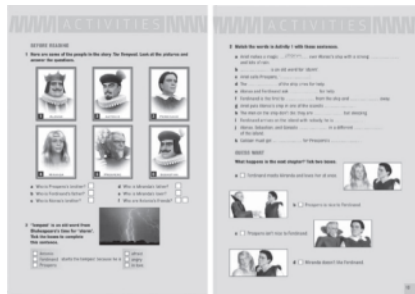


Figure 5: *Great books'* activities

TEACHER/PARENT CONSOLE

From the Teacher/Parent Console, which requires some necessary information like e-mail address, username, and a password, the children's activities, learning progress, vocabulary, reading comprehension, their place on the leaderboard, and the books they have read can be monitored.

The teacher can add students to the class either by their username or by uploading a .csv file with their names and class. Apart from class' progress, individual progress is checked by selecting the student from the list. This option gives a very detailed summary of the books and chapters which have been read, the encountered study words, and also compiles a list of the books read so far.

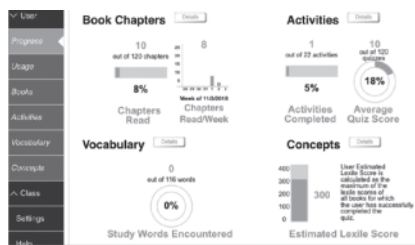


Figure 6: The activity and progress of students' from the Teacher/Parent account

EVALUATION

Gamebooks cover different genres with distinct length and have the potential to facilitate ER out-

side school. Students' progress is quickly followed, and teachers can assign them the readings for home study to build their vocabulary, improve listening skills and reading comprehension. This collection of books are not only beneficial for younger students but also for any English language learner. They provide not only sheer entertainment and language development, but also help readers to become familiar with the world-wide famous stories and novels. The gamification via badges motivates the readers to read more and more. They can retake the quizzes and activities to achieve a higher score on the leaderboard so can compete with their classmates as well.

CONCLUSION

Engaging students in reading is more demanding nowadays and requires more effort from the teachers, but these narrated ebooks with many activities offer an excellent opportunity to help learners to rediscover the joy of reading.

Using an extensive reading approach via mobile devices has potential in language teaching, but it might not be available for all students equally. Although, self-learning applications are becoming more affordable, not every student is financially independent to cover the costs of these apps, not even if the purchase has to be made only once.

Apart from one's financial background, *Gamebooks* is an engaging reading app with interactive activities where students learn through repetition. Their progress is measured real time using the activities for implicit testing purposes. It would be interesting to see and get a feedback on how a teacher would implement this reading application in his teaching method.

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