MICRO-SCOPE

THE ORB OF ZALIBAR NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Notes for the User

The reverse side of the Stylus disc contains two Grass files for use with The Orb of Zalibar. The latter is an adventure that can only be solved by reference to certain essential information that is contained within these two databases. In order to access this information there are two possibilities:

a) Turn the disc over and put it in the drive (the labelled side will be facing downwards). Press Shift/Break and an amended version of Grass Query will be loaded which will enable you to interrogate the databases. The Grass Editor is not on this disc so you will not be able to alter or add records to the existing files. If you want the whole Grass package (including full documentation) then you should contact your local educational computing centre. They will probably have a licence for the software and will provide you with a full copy of the program. Otherwise you can buy a copy from Newman Software, Newman College, Bartley Green, Birmingham B32 3NT but this will cost you £28 + VAT.

b) If you already have the Grass package, then it would be sensible to transfer these files to your own Query disc. To do this, on a single BBC disc drive, place the MAPE disc in the drive (Stylus side facing downwards) and type:
* COPY 0 0 G.Orb and follow the screen prompts (remember that your Query disc is the destination disc and the MAPE disc the source disc). Repeat this operation for the second file G.Rooms and then use the Directory Utility option on your Editor disc to add these file names to the disc directory that Grass utilises.

c) Transferring files to a different database (for those who are familiar with the FIF format)
For those who want to use these files with a different database program, then you will also find on the disc the 4 relevant files:
A.-Orb   A.+Orb   A.-Rooms   A.+Rooms
This is the same information stored in FIF format. You will then need a converter to take you from FIF to the database you are using.

d) The Orb of Zalibar data files are available for the Nimbus and 480Z. If you want to use these files on one of these machines, then please send in a blank formatted disc and 35p in stamps on a self-addressed label. The request should be addressed to MAPE Information Officer (Orb). If you are already sending in a disc to obtain Nimbus Stylus then you will receive these files automatically.

e) If you have problems editing the Orb and Rooms files with your own version of Grass, it may be because you are using an early version of the program on a BBC Master. Please note that the latest version of Grass for the BBC is labelled version 1.0a (which should be available from your local LEA computer centre if they have a licence)

THE ORB OF ZALIBAR

TEACHERS NOTES

The Orb of Zalibar is designed to provide upper junior
children with experience of data handling in a creative
fashion. Whilst gathering and storing of information is
vitally important, it is equally valuable to interrogate ready
made files and draw conclusions from them. The Orb gives the
children plenty of experience of this. However, it must be
pointed out that the Orb of Zalibar is not easy and the
children using the program should have had some experience of
data handling techniques.

So what is the Orb of Zalibar all about? There are two data
files which, when interrogated, give access to a fantasy
world. The program used to create the files is the data
handling package called GRASS, which schools have had access
to for several years now.

The Orb of Zalibar is a data handling experience which
includes three distinct tasks.

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES USING THE ORB OF ZALIBAR

The children should either read, or have read to them, the
background story. This fills in a lot of the details such as
why the orb was created, who created it, and indeed quite a
lot about the land of Advir itself. It is important that the
children are familiar with the story as it may help them
actually solve the problems or, at the very least, give them a
few clues. Certain parts of the story are quite vague,
deliberately so, to create an open-ended element which allows
the children to fill in the gaps in a creative fashion. The
story is, to some extent, incomplete and the children could
create their own conclusions.

TASK 1

The orb of Zalibar has been stolen and the children have to
use the clues and, of course, a data file, to discover the
identity of the 2 thieves.

The children need to read the newspaper, "THE TIMES OF ADVIR"
provided in the pack. This informs them of the theft of the
orb and provides them with their first clue, albeit rather
veiled.

Next, in order to identify the thieves the children will need
to explore the file called "Orb". The children are not given
questions to ask the computer in order to solve the crime,
they are presented with a series of statements from which they
have to draw their own conclusions. If they do this correctly
then the identity of the thieves should become obvious.

TASK 2

This is to explore the Labyrinth of Drogon (filename "Rooms")
to discover where the thieves have hidden the orb, and then to
locate the place where the orb can be recharged. The children
will need to make a map as they go along.

Before they begin the second task the children should read the
poem in order to discover further clues.

This file also contains information about the rooms in the
labyrinth that the children will find essential in solving
task three of the adventure.

TASK 3

The final task is to form a fellowship, as in all good fantasy
books, and plan a journey to the Labyrinth of Drogon to
recover the orb.   (The software doesn't actually provide a
computer based adventure.) The children need to decide which
of the characters to take with them to overcome the hazards
that they will meet on the way. These hazards will be
discovered by studying the route they must take to get to the
labyrinth (on the overground map) and their journey inside the
labyrinth (using their own maps).   The attributes of each
character are listed in the "Orb" file.

In this task certain rules have to be followed. Each member of
the fellowship has to complete the journey. Each member of the
fellowship can only perform one task along the way and only
good people can join the fellowship. The children should be
encouraged to explain why they have chosen each member of the
fellowship.

Once the fellowship has been determined then the keyboard work
related to the Orb of Zalibar has been completed. However,
this can be treated as just the start of further related work
regarding the program.

NB. Keep a copy of the original file. Then, if the children
wish to create further characters, or rooms, and add these to
the file, this will not interfere with solving the mystery in
the future.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

There are many cross curricular links arising out of the Orb of Zalibar, the following are just a few suggestions:

LANGUAGE

Discussion and creative writing about the Land of Advir, the characters, what happens next etc.
Making another "TIMES OF ADVIR" newspaper relating other aspects of the story.

MATHS

Mapping skills, logical thought, make up a system of currency for the Land of Advir etc. Using a turtle graphics package (e.g. LOGO, DART, ARROW), can the children draw an orb, or a map of the labyrinth?

SCIENCE

Design a bridge to span Fellows Deep, using newspaper, straws etc. The bridge must be able to support a predetermined weight.
Study of the weather and weather patterns. Compare our weather to the once predictable weather in Advir.

ART AND CRAFT

Illustrations of the story, using the pictures provided as stimulus.
Make a model of the Labyrinth of Drogon using the map the children created. Models can also be made of the houses of Advir, or a large model of Advir itself.
The children can use computer graphics packages to draw parts of the story or the characters.
The children can design and make Advir souvenirs e.g. Advir bookmarks, Advir egg timers (or orb timers!) etc.

MUSIC

Use a music generating package to write the Advir National Anthem. (e.g. COMPOSE)

Oh, by the way, who or what is Zalibar?

There are 2 files provided in the pack, both of which must be used to solve the tasks.

FILENAME: ORB

This is the most important of the 2 files and will be used extensively by the children. It consists of all the characters who inhabit the Land of Advir. Some are good. Some are bad. Some play an important part in the story whilst others don't. There are other characters living in the Land of Advir who are not mentioned on the file. The children might like to make up some more characters and add them to the file after they have finished their tasks. All the information concerning the characters is entered thus:

NAME: Character's name.
HABITAT: Where the character lives.
NATURE: Good or Evil.
TYPE: Human, Robot etc.
WEAPON: Laser, Sword etc.
COLOUR: Colour of the skin or outer surface.
FOOD: What the character eats.
SKIN: What the character is made of.
BACKGROUND: A little bit of information about the
                 character.
STATEMENT: Some characters have relevant comments to make.

It is suggested that the children become familiar with the nature of the file before using it to try to solve the tasks. Either the teacher or the children could create some simple questions. All the information needed to solve tasks 1 and 3 can be found in this file. Some of it is quite obvious, whilst other information is "hidden" and the children need to make some deductions.

FILENAME: ROOMS

This file refers to the 20 rooms to be found in the Labyrinth of Drogon, and it must be used to solve the second task. The ROOMS file consists of the following information:

NAME: The name of the room.
MAGIC: Good or bad magic to be found in this room.
EXIT NORTH: Way out of the rooms, if any.
EXIT SOUTH:
EXIT EAST:
EXIT WEST:
STATE: What the room is like inside.
HAZARDS: Some   rooms   have   hazards   which   certain
                 characters will help you to pass.

By using this file the children should be able to make a map of the labyrinth and to work out, from the clues given at various points in the adventure, where the orb is hidden and where to take it to be recharged. By plotting the route through the labyrinth the children should obtain clues to help them determine which of the characters to be found in the ORB file to take with them on the fellowship.

THE ANSWERS

TASK 1

The two criminals who steal the orb are EYE-ESS and FALDOR. There are several ways of searching the file in order to arrive at the correct answer, the children should be encouraged to keep a record of their searches in order to explain their deductions.

TASK 3

The Fellowship is made up as follows:

JOHN   - Strong enough to move the boulders blocking the pass.

REKAB   - Flies over the river carrying passengers.

SETH   - Helps you pass the Arch of Heroes.

COMPUTRON   - Guides you through the Room of Numbers.

ABRADAC   - Has a power equal to Drogon's to get you through Drogon's Lair.

SALTFLID   - Melts the ice in the Ice Room.

DRONJO   - Helps you through the Water Cave.

RS60   - Helps you through the Cave of Stars.

It is a good idea to encourage the children to give the reasons for taking the people on ther Fellowship.

A filled in map is also included for solving TASK 2. However, it only shows the locations of the rooms and not the hazards to be found there.

The orb is actually hidden in the Hall of Mirrors and it can be recharged in the Chamber of Life.

The Labyrinth of Dragon