

Spelling Dragon and the Knights of Mt. Brainier

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A. Introduction

Spelling Dragon and the Knights of Mt. Brainier provides a unique way for a student to practice his or her spelling, as well as learn vocabulary in English or Spanish. While the program is not designed to teach a foreign language, it may be most appropriately used as a supplement to Spanish and English instruction. The program includes several thousand vocabulary words, ranging in difficulty from "cat" to "mendacity". The game play of the program involves the student helping a knight to spell a specified number of words correctly within the time allotted. This is done by building bridges of letters through the Spelling Dragon's lair. When the required number of bridges has been built, the knight will be transported to the Spelling Dragon's treasure trove for a reward.

B. Objectives

1. To practice spelling vocabulary words.
2. To learn vocabulary words in English and/or Spanish.

C. Methods

Game Play

The primary objective of the program is to spell words correctly in order to build a bridge through the Spelling Dragon's lair. The number of words to complete a lair and the amount of time allotted for each quest varies depending upon the lair the student chooses. After correctly spelling the required number of words within the allotted time, the student will be transported to the dragon's treasure trove and be rewarded.

Upon starting the program, the student will be asked to choose between the English and Spanish versions. All help messages, game play elements, and questions will appear in the selected language.

In order to save the program's high scores, the program will install a file onto the computer's hard drive. Macintosh(r) users may find these files in the System Folder; Windows(r) users may find them in the WINDOWS folder on the computer's hard drive. Upon entering the program for the first time, the program will ask you if installing these game files onto the computer is okay. To continue with game play and save your scores, click the checkmark. If you click "X," you will not be able save your high scores, and you will not be able to access the "High Scores" screen.


At the Character Selection screen, the student may again select whether he or she would like to be asked questions in Spanish or English. The student will then choose the knight that he or she would like to represent. This knight will appear on the subsequent screens in the dragon's lair. To select a knight, the student should click on the knight's picture. From this screen the student may also quit the game, view the High Scores screen, or visit his or her Treasury.

Upon choosing a knight, the student will be transported to the Lair Selection screen. On this screen, the student may select the level of word difficulty by using the up and down arrows on the lower right portion of the screen. The student will then select a lair by clicking on one of the entrances on the center of the screen. Rolling the cursor over a lair entrance will tell the student the number of rooms (questions) in that lair, as well as the amount of time that is allotted to complete it.


When the student selects a lair, he or she will be transported to the question and answer screen. The student will hear the word and see displayed at the top of the screen the clue for the word he or she must spell, as well as the translation of that word. For example, the question might read, "Spell the word _____. In Spanish, _____ is 'perro'." The spoken question will say the word the student is to spell, but the written question will not show it.

To spell words, the student must drop letter stones onto the bridge outline on the center of the screen. When all of the missing pieces of the bridge have been filled in, the bridge and the word are completed. If the word is spelled correctly, the knight will run across the bridge to collect a bag of gold. If the word is spelled incorrectly, the Spelling Dragon will knock it down with his fiery breath.

Each time the student spells a vocabulary word correctly, the knight advances to the next room in the dragon's lair. The map on the upper left portion of the screen tells the user his or her location in the lair and the number of rooms needed to be completed in the remaining time. If the time runs out before the student has completed the required number of screens and has enough gold in his or her stash, the student will be given the option of buying more time. If the student chooses not to, or does not have enough gold, the student will be returned to the Lair Selection screen to begin a new adventure. If the student successfully completes the required rooms in the time allotted, the student will be transported to the reward screen.


From the reward screen, the student may choose to play the same lair again, return to the Lair Selection screen to choose another lair or level, or view his or her treasure in the Treasury.  [up](#)

Game Interface

There are four primary screens in Spelling Dragon and the Knights of Mt. Brainier. The first screen, the Character Selection screen, allows the student to select a knight, choose whether to play in Spanish or English, and quit the game. It also gives access to the High Scores screen and the Treasury. The second screen, the Lair Selection screen, allows the student to adjust the level of word difficulty and game play difficulty. The third screen, the Question and Answer screen, features the spelling and vocabulary portion of the game.  [up](#)




I. The Character Selection Screen

The Character Selection screen allows the student to access the primary facets of game play. To change the primary language for game play, (that is, the language in which questions and help messages will be given), click on one of the two language buttons along the top of the screen. To select a knight, click on the knight's picture in the center of the screen. To review the high scores, the student should click on the "#1" button in the bottom left corner of the screen. To view the Treasury, click on the gemstone button in the bottom left corner of the screen. To turn off the background music, the student should click on the blue music note. To exit the program, the student should click on the red arrow button. To hear a help message for this screen, click on the green question mark. Most buttons feature an explanation of the button, which appears in the black text box at the bottom of the screen when the student rolls the cursor over the button.  [up](#)



II. The Lair Selection Screen


The student will be transported to the Lair Selection screen upon choosing one of the knights on the Character Selection screen. To select a lair, click on one of the ten lair entrances on the screen. When the student rolls the cursor over a lair entrance, a description of the lair's difficulty (number of rooms and time allotted) will appear in the black text box at the bottom of the screen. Change the level of difficulty of the spelling and vocabulary words for every lair by clicking on the gray up and down arrow buttons in the lower portion of the screen. In this manner, each lair has 15 levels of difficulty, for a total of 150 levels among the 10 lairs. To turn off the background music, the student should click on the blue music note. To return to the Character Selection screen, click on the red arrow button. To hear a help message for this screen,

click on the green question mark. Most buttons feature an explanation of the button, which appears in the black text box at the bottom of the screen when the student rolls the cursor over the button.  [up](#)



III. The Question and Answer Screen


The question is located along the upper portion of the screen, as well as read aloud. The audio version will speak, for example, "Spell the word 'dog'. In Spanish, 'dog' is 'perro'." The corresponding visual version would read, "Spell the word _____. In Spanish, _____ is 'perro'." To spell the word, the student should drag the letter blocks from the bottom of the screen onto the bridge outline in the center of the screen. The student can change the position of a letter on the bridge by dragging it to another position. A letter can be replaced by dragging another letter block onto its position in the bridge. When all of the empty bridge spaces are filled, the word is evaluated.

The student can bypass the positive or negative feedback by clicking on the center of the screen after completing a word. The student's position in the lair is denoted on the map in the upper left portion of the screen. The student can view his or her score, as well as the remaining time, in the upper right corner of the screen. To turn off the background music, the student should click on the blue music note. To return to the Lair Selection screen, click on the red arrow button. To hear a help message for this screen, click on the green question mark. Most buttons feature an explanation of the button, which appears in the black text box at the bottom of the screen when the student rolls over the button.  [up](#)



D. Tracking


The tracking function data is stored in a text file that can be accessed by most word processing programs. (Hint: For best results, change the font of your tracking output to a monospaced font, such as "Courier.") In this program, the tracking output will appear in the same language you have chosen for your game. If you switch languages throughout game play, the language of the tracking output will also change.

The tracking function is automatically activated. You will be given the opportunity to access the tracking information when you exit the program. When the student is finished using the program, click on the "EXIT" button. On the next screen that appears, there are three options: SAVE, PRINT, and EXIT. To save the tracking information, click the "SAVE" button; when the dialogue box appears, name the file, and designate where you want to save it. To print the tracking information, click the "PRINT" button, and follow the directions of your operating system. To exit the program without saving the tracking information, click the "EXIT" button.  [up](#)

E. Teaching suggestions

As you can see from the above descriptions, Spelling Dragon and the Knights of Mt. Brainier offers students an opportunity to improve their spelling and vocabulary, as well as supplements their instruction in foreign language. The program may be best used as a supplement to spelling instruction, or to help associate English and Spanish vocabulary words. The ways you use the program will vary depending upon your students' needs and abilities. You should begin by determining the skills or information your students need to learn or practice.

Spelling Dragon offers fifteen levels of word difficulty. To focus on basic spelling and vocabulary words, select levels 1 - 5. To practice moderately difficult words, select levels 6 - 10. To practice difficult spelling words and

vocabulary, select levels 11 - 15. Students who are hearing impaired or students who want to specifically concentrate on learning second language vocabulary may want to play the game without the audio question. This can be done by adjusting the volume on the student's computer.  [up](#)

F. Troubleshooting Problems and Answers

Problem: The program runs slowly on my computer.

Answer: This occurs on some system configurations that have intensive use of existing RAM. If increasing virtual memory is not effective, restarting with extensions off (by holding down the SHIFT key as the computer is turned on) or quitting all other open applications may help. To gain even more speed, you can also have a qualified technician add additional RAM.

Problem: The help buttons do not work and I can't hear the music.

Answer: All of these messages are audio. Therefore, if you have a computer that does not have a sound card, when you click on these buttons, nothing will happen. However, you should be able to operate the software without these messages by consulting the "Teacher's Manual", or simply by experimenting with the program.

Problem: The "Save" button in the "Save" dialogue box is inactive ("grayed out"), and I cannot save my game or tracking information.

Answer: You might be trying to save to a CD-ROM or locked diskette. Designate a different location for the saved document (e.g., a folder on your hard drive).

Problem: When I attempted to print my tracking information, I received an error message.

Answer: If there is no printer set up with your computer, you may receive an error message. If you do have a printer, check your printer settings and connections.

Problem: I left the program running; when I returned, portions of my screen had disappeared.

Answer: If your screen saver is activated while the program is running, a portion of your screen may disappear. If your screen saver interferes with regular game play, try disengaging the screen saver program.

Problem: After I began using the program, a file called "dragon.hsc" appeared on my hard drive.

Answer: In order to save your high scores, the program will install a file onto your computer's hard drive called " dragon.hsc." If for some reason, you would like to delete all of the high scores, you may do so by deleting the "dragon.hsc" file from your hard drive. Deleting the folder will delete all of the high scores, so you should choose to delete it with caution. After deleting the

file, the next time you enter the program, you will need to agree to have the program install files onto your hard drive in order to begin saving high scores again.

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