Reading Magic Library™

To Timmy, Sarah, Amy, and Archie.

Welcome to the world of *Reading Magic Library. We are delighted that you have chosen to spend some time playing and reading with your child at the computer. We hope that your family will enjoy this new kind of software, called lapware, as much as we have.*

Tom Snyder
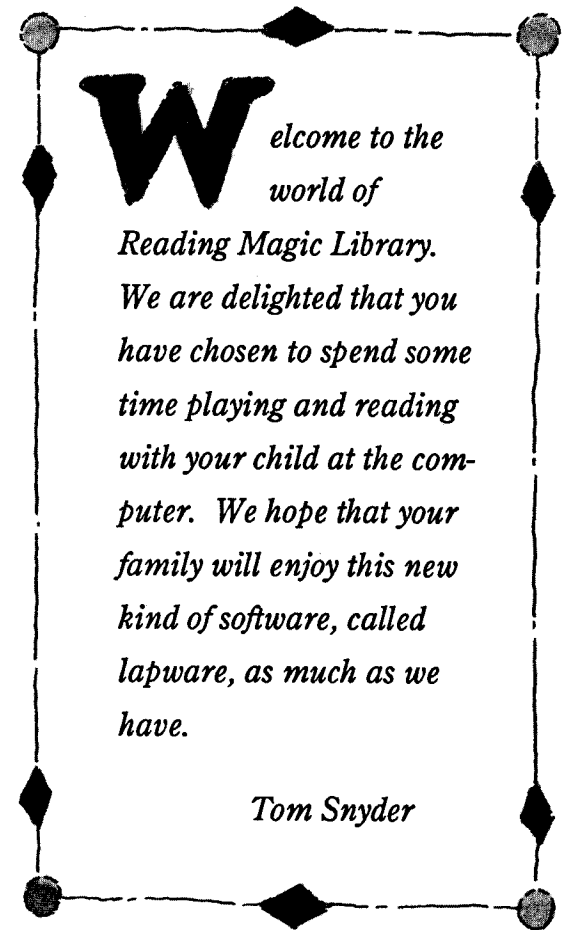
# The easiest to use software that you will ever own!

Reading Magic Library is truly easy to use. Our intention was to create an involving, interactive, and uncomplicated experience for you and your child. The following is an explanation of the program and a few respectful thoughts about how you might want to use this program with your child.

(If your computer is an IBM PC or compatible, please take a look at page 14.)

1) Insert the **Reading Magic** disk into your computer.
2) Turn on the computer.
3) After several seconds, a title screen will appear. Press any key.
4) You will be asked to type your child's name. Do so, and then press ENTER or RETURN.
5) The story will begin by displaying a picture and some words. With child in your lap, read the text aloud. When you are ready, push any key to advance the story. If a key is inadvertantly pressed before you have finished reading, the backspace key will return you to the previous picture and text.

Sometimes, the **Reading Magic** program will want to know what you or your child think should happen next in the story. For example, perhaps the hero or heroine of the story must decide whether to escape from a situation by boat or by airplane. The words boat and airplane will appear on the screen with colorfully highlighted first letters. Magic flashing lights will then determine who can make the decision: your child or you and your child together. Then, having decided what will happen next, press the first letter of the chosen word. The character will continue in the story - by boat or by airplane - following the course determined by you and your child.
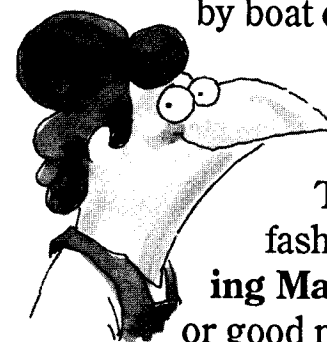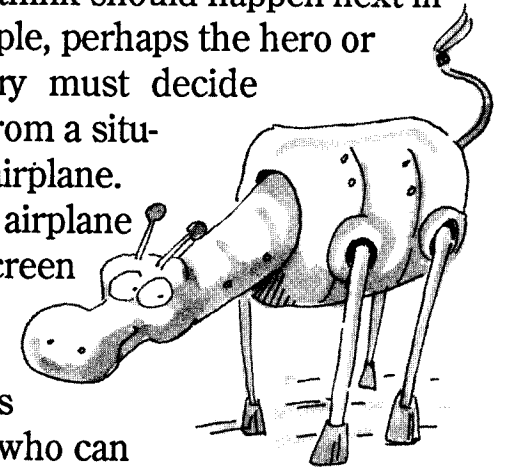
The story continues in this fashion right to the end. **Reading Magic** will then say good day or good night to your child and shut itself off. Depending on how much time you and your child spend discussing decisions and searching for keys on the keyboard, one trip through the story will take between ten and fifteen minutes.

And if we might share a few thoughts...

Reading Magic Library stories add a new element to story telling. Because these stories are interactive (that is, you have some control over what happens next in a story), the reading experience might feel somewhat different from reading a book. We have tried to minimize the differences. Typically, in other kinds of computer interactive fiction, the choices to be made are either intellectual puzzles or arcade sequences, and are not appropriate for very young children. The choices in **Reading Magic** stories are simple and visual, and, thus, do not detract from the delicate flow of good story telling.
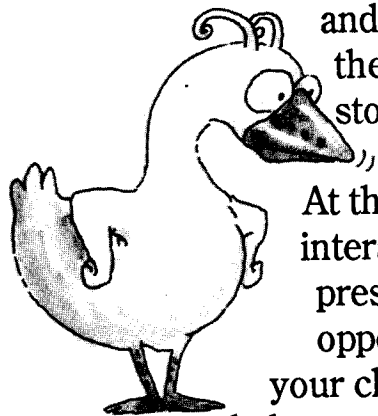
At the same time, reading interactive stories aloud does present new and wonderful opportunites between you and your child. The following suggestions and observations have been made by parents, babysitters, grand parents, and friends who have shared **Reading Magic Library** with a young child.
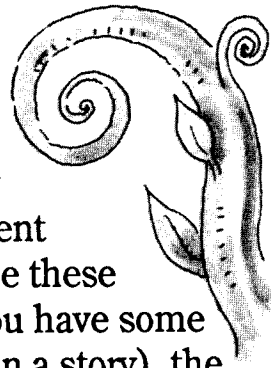
"One of the things that kids love about stories is their predictability. I was amazed to watch my child make exactly the same choices each time we read through a Reading Magic story. He looked forward all day to making those same choices! He felt very powerful and in control that he was allowed to make choices, and it didn't bother him at all to wait two or three weeks before branching out on some choice. Then one night he would announce with pride at dinner, "Tonight I want to take the airplane instead of the boat!"

"When we finished our first Reading Magic story, I was tempted to suggest to my child that we start over immediately and explore some of the other choices. But with time I have come to treat these interactive stories just as I treat our normal bedtime reading. We do the story together in about twelve minutes and then it's time to brush the teeth. The desire to quickly exhaust all of the paths in the story came from my itchiness, not my child's.

"My favorite moments in these stories are when my kid gives me her theories on why

we should or should not make a particular choice. The explanations are fabulous and often outrageous. In fact, verbalizing theories might be the most powerful part of the entire experience."

"My young child wanted to push the keys that advance the story. That was fine, but sometimes she reached forward to press a key, usually the spacebar, before I had finished reading the text aloud. We had to come to an understanding about the buttons that is just like our understanding about turning the page in a book before I have finished reading that page. Now she waits until I have stopped reading for a few moments before reaching forward to push a button. Once my child gets drawn into the story itself, she becomes more relaxed about button pushing."
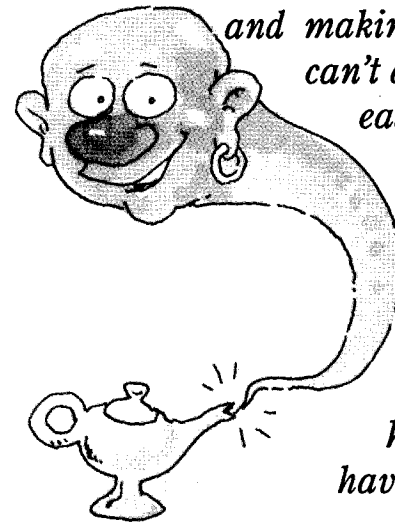
(Incidentally, there is a built-in timer in **Reading Magic** that waits for a full second before any key will advance the story. This delay prevents an over-eager child from galloping through the story. In addition, the backspace key will let you jump back to previous pictures and text. The backspace key will not, however, let you change previous choices.)

To make a choice at a decision point in the story, the first letter of a choice word must be pressed. This simple act of making the choice can actually be broken down into several steps: deciding which word corresponds to your choice, figuring out the first letter of that word, locating that letter on the keyboard, and, finally, pressing the key. A parent can involve his or her child at any point along that small chain of events. Allowing your child to be more involved from one reading to the next can be very rewarding.

"After six or eight readings of a particular Reading Magic story, I discovered that my boy wanted to sit alone at the computer, reading the story and making choices on his own. He can't actually read words, but he easily memorizes dozens of long paragraphs and repeats the text verbatim. At first, I felt left out and I was even disappointed that this activity might become as singular as was his television watching behavior. However, I quickly dis-

covered that he took great pride in his pretend "reading". And I found that whenever we started a new story or whenever he wanted to make a new choice in an old story, he was, of course, eager to sit with someone who could really read."

Some final thoughts on reading aloud with your children

Many families develop important rituals around reading together. For some, reading always happens at the child's bedtime or naptime, and it may well be accompanied by elaborate preparations: blankets, pillows, favorite stuffed animals and a special chair. For others, reading together happens whenever there is a free moment and interest. Regardless of your approach, there is much to be gained from this shared experience.

• Your child derives a sense of comfort and security from the repetition of a story; he or she gets to know the characters and anticipates what will happen as the story is retold.

• Your child begins to develop a powerful appreciation for the usefulness of the skill of reading. He or she will watch with increasing envy as a reading adult picks up any new story and reveals great new characters and situations.
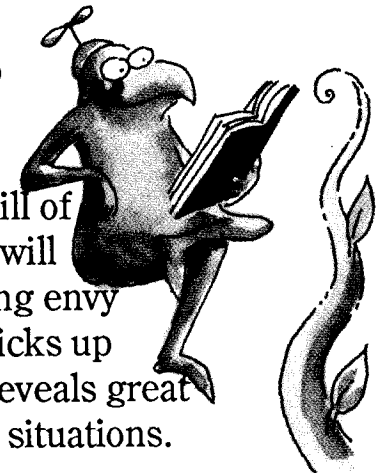
- Your child is exposed to rich vocabulary and ideas that do not necessarily come up in every day life.

- Last but not least on this brief list is the pure enjoyment that parents can take from the feeling of a shared and often emotional experience with their child.

Contrary to popular opinion, the computer does not need to be an isolating experience for your child. Instead, it can become a tool that brings us closer together. Perhaps the home computer's greatest educational contribution will be to create shared experiences so powerful that spending hours alone in front of a video screen will become a thing of the past.

IBM PC or compatibles

If your computer is an IBM PC or compatible, you can use your **Reading Magic** disk two ways.

1) You can first start up your computer without the **Reading Magic** disk. Doing this requires that you have a DOS disk in your computer when it is turned on. Then, when DOS has been loaded into your computer (as indicated by the prompt, A:) you can insert the **Reading Magic** disk into your computer, type MAGIC, and then press ENTER. The program will begin several seconds later.

2) You can transfer DOS from your own copy of a DOS disk onto your **Reading Magic** disk. After you have done this, you will be able to simply insert your **Reading Magic** disk into the computer and turn it on. The program will begin on its own.

If you have one disk drive built into your computer, insert your DOS disk into your computer and turn it on. When the DOS prompt appears (as indicated by the prompt, A:) replace the DOS disk with the **Reading Magic** disk. Type INSTALL1 (one word) and then press ENTER.

You will be prompted to occasionally replace the **Reading Magic** disk with your DOS disk. After several switches, your **Reading Magic** disk will be a self-starting disk.

If you have two disk drives built into your computer, insert your DOS disk into the A drive of your computer and turn it on. When the DOS prompt appears (as indicated by the prompt, A:) replace the DOS disk with the **Reading Magic** disk. Place the DOS disk in drive B. Type INSTALL2 (one word) and then press ENTER. After several moments, your **Reading Magic** disk will be a self-starting disk.

Note: Owners of Tandy Computers with DOS built in can ignore approach 2 and still have a self-starting disk.