y Robert Lewis

We all know how influential computers are in the making of movies. If it was not for computers, movies like Star Wars and Independence Day would not be possible. Up until the last year or so, computers were always in the background creating the illusions and special effects that we all take for granted. Then, there came a film that broke all barriers to how computers are used in creating the illusion of movie magic. Instead of playing "second banana," the computer became the star of this film. Except for the sound and music (and even that was digitally mastered), every aspect of the film was created deep within the heart of Pixar's computers. The film I speak of is Toy Story by Disney Entertainment.

Enter Toy Story
Toy Story was the first film where all the visual elements were completely rendered by computer. Everything was so well developed that it was very easy to forget that you were looking at a computer generated movie. Since it was created within a computer it seemed

only natural that an interactive storybook spin off would be in the making. So if your kids enjoyed the movie, now they can relive the adventure with the release of the Toy Story animated storybook by Disney Interactive and Pixar Animation Studios.

Like a Fine Wine...
Ever since the release of the Lion King storybook, the quality and substance of Disney interactive storybooks has vastly improved. Toy Story has to be their best creation to date. With the help of Pixar Studios, the feel and fun that fueled the movie is captured within the fifteen story screens. With this in mind, children of all ages are able to relive and take part in the magic and fantasy of the film.

o Much to Do
If sitting back and watching the story unfold automatically does not stir your imagination enough, there is always the hundreds of hot spots you can click on for further exploration. Disney Interactive has come a long way since their first storybook. You just never know what will happen when you click on your favorite characters or different objects within a given story screen. There are so many clickable areas within Toy Story that it will take you hours to find all of them.

Thanks Pixar
Another unique aspect of this storybook has to do with the company that did the programing. As I wrote earlier, Pixar Animation Studio orchestrated the production of the feature movie and the storybook. This gave them the ability to add additional features to the story so that it would be more unique unto itself. As the story unfolds, you will experience funny new action sequences not seen in the film. While other Disney storybooks are just the

retelling of their movies, Toy Story has the unique advantage of having many variations to it.

Educational Too
To help reinforce the educational value of this storybook, Disney has included five activities. These educational games include follow directions, shadow/shape matching, warmer/colder and much more. These exercises help to expand and develop skills in critical thinking and learning. Three of these five activities also allow for multiple skill levels. This allows you adjust for the age of the learner. While some interactive storybooks include educational reinforcements, Toy Story is the first to allow the user to adjust the difficulty of the activity to meet the need of the child.

Look Who's Not Talking
Although the voice talents of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen are sadly missing in the roles of Woody and Buzz, John Ratzenberger (Cliff from Cheers) is back to reprise his part as Ham the Pig. As Ham, John serves as the stories narrator and your guide as he explains how to run the storybook. To further enhance the translation of the film to storybook are sound bytes of the rest of the original cast members (i.e, Annie Potts, Don Rickles, Jim Varney, etc) in their original roles.

Last Words
Overall I found Toy Story extremely well done. Children of all ages are sure to get hours of fun out of it over and over again . It is witty, funny and a delight to play and interact with. The educational components are well thought out and are sure enhance kids abilities in critical thinking areas. So jump on the nearest rocket or stagecoach and take your imagination to infinity. Enjoy!

Pros
• Fantastic 3D graphics
• Animation is very smooth
• Variation in story line gives a new edge to the plot
• Hundreds of clickable hot spots makes the story fun to explore
• Five different educational activities help to improve problem solving
  and concentration skills.
• First interactive storybook to have multiple skill levels in three of it's
  educational modules

Cons
• Tom Hanks and Tim Allen did not reprise their roles as Woody and Buzz

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