

# **Sellardore Tales**

***Selladore Tales Handbook*** for the ***Selladore Tales*** software pack.

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## Introduction

**S***ellardore Tales* is a computer software package with associated support material, all specially designed for children who find reading a challenge. It is specifically aimed at those with a reading age of about 8 and a chronological age of 10 and above.

There are two main parts to *Sellardore Tales*:

An illustrated reading book **Zorin, the Curse of Sellardore** introduces the main characters, Tem, Soolin and Darvid who journey to Sellardore seeking adventure. They are sent to retrieve the Wand of Command from the Ork mines and (only just) prevent it from falling into the hands of the evil wizard Zorin. During their escape from the Ork mines they start a landslide which blocks the Black River. Without realising it at the time they have cut off the water supply to Black River village.

**Black River Quest** is the computer adventure. It continues the story from where *The Curse of Zorin* left off, thus providing another exciting quest in the land of Sellardore. The children take the part of Tem, Soolin and Darvid, their task being to unblock the Black River and save the villagers from starvation. They do this by solving problems and making choices in this imaginary world. The activity has a simple structure with a 'map' of screens for the user to navigate. The software aims to enrich the Zorin reading experience, and can be tailored to children's needs. It can be played at two levels — 'easy' and 'hard' (see page 10 and 'Level' on page 20).

The support materials include maps and 20 activity sheets based on chapters in the book and events in the program. The text and illustrations from the Zorin storybook are included on the disc and we have also provided a talking version of the book (page 26).

*Sellardore Tales* is of course not in itself a solution to children's reading difficulties, but it is an exciting and motivating activity for the classroom or in the home. Like our other title ***Stig of the Dump***, *Sellardore Tales* not only encourages reluctant readers but can also be used to cover National Curriculum strands in modelling and simulations. It also links directly into the QCA IT scheme Unit 3D: *Exploring simulations*.

We look forward to hearing what you think about the pack.

## HARDWARE

***Black River Quest*** and the ***Talking 'Zorin' Book*** require a Pentium PC, running Windows 95, 98, ME, NT or 2000. 32 Mb of memory is needed, but as with all Windows software, the more memory your computer has, the better it will perform. The program and files will occupy around 100 Mb of your hard disc. The programs are designed to run in a resolution of 800 x 600 with 32,000 colours. Both programs can be configured to switch modes automatically — see page 20.

## INSTALLATION

Please read any notes supplied with the pack or displayed on the screen.

If you are installing the software on a network, the folder you install it to is likely to be 'read-only' to users, so when children try to save their positions in *Black River Quest* (see page 11) they will get error messages. To avoid this you must specify a 'Save Folder'. Please see page 20 for how this works.

If the program does not start correctly or if the animations do not work, you may need to install the *Flash Plugin* from the icon that was installed with the program. If you do not have this icon, you can run it by double-clicking on 'FLASH.EXE' in the 'Extras' folder inside the program folder.

Some older Windows 95 machines may have problems when the Flash installer runs, e.g. you may get 'Registration Error' messages. To fix this, install *Microsoft Internet Explorer* version 3.02 or later. We have included this on the CD — simply run IE.EXE (in the EXTRAS folder) and follow the on-screen instructions. Once this is complete, run OLEUPDATE.EXE and again follow the instructions. Finally, run FLASH.EXE. *Black River Quest* should now run OK.

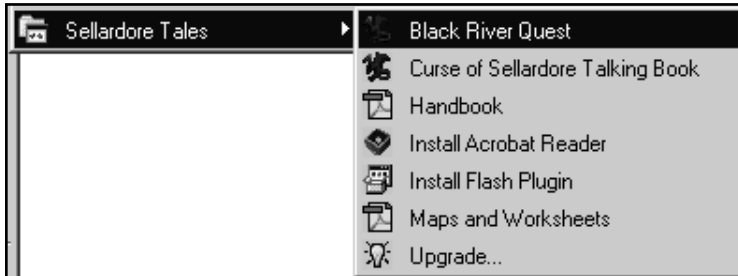
## MOUSE BUTTONS

The following terms are used throughout this Handbook to describe the use of the mouse buttons. **Click** means press the left mouse button once, then immediately release it. **Double-click** means press and release your left mouse button twice in quick succession, like rapping on a door. **Right-click** means press the right mouse button once, then release it immediately.

## Starting *Black River Quest*

**T**his section explains how the adventure works. As explained in ‘*Black River Quest in Detail*’ (page 10), children need to have read (or have read to them) the accompanying reader, ‘*Zorin, The Curse of Sellardore*’, since this sets the scene and the challenge for the adventure. The CD includes an illustrated talking version of the book — see below for where to find it.

To run the program, click the **Start** button and find **Programs**. You will see the following items:



To start the adventure, click on the **Black River Quest** icon. You will see the following Title screen.



The Title screen has four buttons you can click:

**Options** – click here to set the Save path and change options (see page 18)

**Help** – clicking here pops up a menu from where children can read the Instructions, See the word list (the words the program 'knows'), or Print it.

**Play the adventure**

**Quit**

For your initial exploration we suggest you just click on 'Play the adventure' to see the opening scene:



The animated picture shows where you are, somewhere on the dried-up bed of the Black River. To the right there is a written description of the location — 'You are next to a dry river bed' — along with the direction/s you could move, in this case just **south**.

The description and available directions can be heard by clicking on the upper red **mouth** button. When first installed speech is disabled, so to hear it you will have to enable it — see page 19.

At the very bottom of the screen is the 'What next?' or **input box**. This is where you 'do' things. Commands can be entered in three ways:

### Typing

You can type what you want to do, e.g. GO SOUTH, pressing the <Enter> key after each command. When using the keyboard to enter directions (N, S, E, W, up, down, in, out) you can either type the initial letter of the direction, or the word in full.

### Clicking

You can click the words on the **word bar** (the buttons across the middle of the screen). They will appear in the input box, just as if you had typed them.

### Pop-up menus

You can also put commands into the input box by using a **pop-up command** list which can pop up when you right-click. Just click on the word you want. When first installed this option is off — see page 19 for how to enable it.

Whatever you input, make sure that you press <Enter> after it, because until you do that the program will wait for you to keep on typing! And if you are new to adventuring, please read the note on the following page about the sometimes surprising responses *Black River Quest* may sometimes give.

The **message box** (above the input box) displays the program's responses, together with help messages. Children need to pay particular attention to this area in order to keep track of what is happening in the game. Speech is available here too, so long as it is enabled in Options — see page 19. However the program will not always speak the first sentence, because this will nearly always contain children's text — and we had no way of sampling that!



Descriptions of locations like this one contain a list of objects you can 'see', although the things it says you can see will not always appear in the illustration!

Typing TAKE LAMP (for example) is how you pick objects up.



Things that you have picked up can appear in the **object box** to the right of the message box, as in the illustration above. (When first installed the object box is turned off, but you can enable it in Options - see page 19). Moving the mouse pointer over an object will tell you its name, while clicking on an object will copy its name into the input box. If there are more than 3 objects, scroll arrows will appear so that you can find and click on the 'hidden' objects.

You can do lots of things with objects, e.g. DROP them, THROW them, USE them, LIGHT them. However if your input is not logical, or if you do not have everything you need to do the action (e.g. you have the lamp but not the matches so you cannot light it), the program will politely tell you.

We suggest that you wander around the game for a while, entering commands (e.g., TAKE LAMP, N, etc) and picking up objects, just to see what happens and where you can go. The specific tasks and complete solutions are described from page 12 onwards, and the enclosed maps will help.

To finish the adventure, type QUIT, or click **quit** on the word bar.

## **NEW ADVENTURERS READ THIS**

Those of us who have used this kind of software for years are used to the fact that computers are still pretty dumb and can give silly responses to inputs. This is because it's not possible for programmers to predict everything users will enter, so the software will occasionally come up with something stupid.

A good example from *Black River Quest* is typing LOOK AT MY SHOES while beside the dry river bed. For reasons explained on page 11, *Black River Quest* only responds to the word LOOK and does so at this location by giving a description of the river (i.e. the 'default' text for that location), rather than your shoes!

Children soon learn about this and it does not seem to bother them, even though such responses can come as surprises sometimes.

That said, please let us know if you think the program is giving a particularly silly answer to a particularly sensible input, and we will see if we can fix it.

## Black River Quest in Detail

**T**his section builds on the ideas introduced in the previous section. You only need to read it if you need more help or information. It includes ‘worked solutions’ to the two versions of the adventure (see below, and page 20 for how to switch between them).

The main characteristic needed to explore this or any other computer adventure is a willingness to try things out. Do not discount ideas until you have had a go at them. Some tasks need a specific combination of words so, if you feel you are on the right track, keep at it. It is also worth remembering that, although the program can give you plenty of help, it can only do so in response to your inputs — if you just sit there, nothing will happen!

**Black River Quest** contains two versions of the game — **Easy** and **Hard**. We have provided these to help you match the program to needs and circumstances in terms of time and resources.

The ‘easy’ version (set as default) with its straight-forward linked problems can be completed in an hour or two.

The ‘hard’ version adds additional locations (see map on page 17) and additional problems, the main one being the *very* old fox, chicken and grain problem requiring children to get those three items from one side of the river to the other, one at a time, never leaving the fox with the chicken or the chicken with the grain! Players are also asked to make green paint by mixing blue and yellow. These problems were added because they can stimulate opportunities for work away from the computer.

Solutions to both versions can be found on page 14. However before you are tempted to work through them, you might consider that it is worthwhile spending some time solving the program for yourself, because you will then have a good idea of the challenges children will face and where they might need help.

### INPUTS

The program accepts *any* words in response to the prompt, ‘*What next?*’ but it is important to note that it only actually acts on and deals with the first two

words it *recognises*, working from left to right. Thus the sentence 'TAKE THE LAMP AND THE MASK' will be 'translated' as TAKE LAMP. This is mentioned in the children's instructions available from the Title screen.

You cannot voluntarily carry more than five objects, but the game will sometimes force you to!

Inputs are in sentences of up to 30 characters (including spaces).

Page 21 lists the words that *Black River Quest* 'knows' — you might want to photocopy this list. You can also view and print the main words from the Title screen.

## **SPECIAL WORDS**

### **Save**

This word saves a game so that children do not have to start from the beginning the next time they play. They must enter a name for their 'saved game', and should be encouraged to use different names for saved games. However if they try to use one that has already been used, they will be warned.

To **delete saved games**, delete them from the Save Game Path directory set in the Options (see page 20). Saved games have a *.sel* extension.

It is worth noting that although 'mistakes' can be made (e.g. the fox might run off), children cannot get themselves into a position from which they cannot finish the game (because the old woman has an endless supply of foxes). Despite this, it is worth encouraging them to save at various points so that, should they get into a mess, they can easily step back to a previous point.

If you are running the software on a network the folder it was installed to is likely to be 'read-only' to users, so when children try to save their positions in *Black River Quest* they will get error messages unless a new 'Save Folder' has been specified. See page 20 for how to do this.

### **Load**

*Load* allows children to continue a previously saved game. It is useful for when someone's 'go' has to spread over a couple of sessions.

### **Quit**

This stops the adventure and returns to the Title screen.

## **Help, Hint**

These words *may* provide on-screen clues. However clues are not provided at every location, just in those where they are most likely to be needed.

## **Look, Examine, Explore, Search**

The primary function of the whole *Sellardore Tales* package is to get children reading. For this reason we decided to pack in as much text as possible, and one of the ways we achieved this was to extend the ‘normal’ use of the word LOOK. Not only will this sometimes help with the actual adventure, but it also provides additional descriptive text on the many rooms and objects; for example LOOK at the LAMP responds with *‘This is a rusty old lamp, but there’s some oil in it and a short wick.’*

## **Inventory, List**

The pictures in the optional object box show what is being carried, but if this is disabled (page 19) children can type INV or LIST to get a list of what they are currently carrying.

## **THE STORY**

The following is a brief narrative of the ‘Hard’ version to provide an idea of the tasks involved in both versions.

You find yourself next to the Black River which has dried up near Black River Village — see the reading book *‘Zorin, The Curse of Sellardore’* for how this came about. Your task is to unblock the river.

You enter the village and search the houses to discover a lamp, matches and blue paint. Searching to the east and north you discover an old shack where a strange old woman gives you a fox, a chicken and some grain. She needs you to get these to her sister on the other side of the river. Dropping any of these three items anywhere other than in the ‘useful-looking’ pits on each side of the river will cause you to lose them.

The river is to the east, where there is a boat and one of the pits. Plainly you need to ROW across the river to the old woman's sister. The problem is that you can only carry one object in the boat at a time...

DROPPing any of the items into the pit seems to help, but you soon discover that if you leave the chicken with the grain — or the fox with the chicken — something will get eaten! So you must work out a way of getting each item across the river without any of them being eaten.

Because there is a similar pit on the other side of the river, you can move things back and forth easily. Should you get the sequence wrong, the old woman in the shack has an endless supply of foxes, chickens and grain, which means that you do not have to start the game all over again each time something gets eaten. In any case you did SAVE your position, didn't you?

With all three objects across, the old woman's sister gives you a red mask.

After exploring for a while you find a doorway cut into the side of a mountain. There is no handle on the door and no keyhole, but around the door are carvings of faces. There seems to be a missing carving, and the gap looks just the right size for your mask. However all the carvings are green, our mask is red, and nothing happens when you try to OPEN the door...

You remember that beside the old woman's shack was a workshop. You return and, after searching the workshop, you find a tin of yellow paint. You MIX this with the blue paint you are already carrying (aren't you?) to make green. Now you can PAINT the mask green and USE it to open the door, through which there is a cave entrance.

In the cave it is too dark to see, so you LIGHT your lamp. Searching the caves you find many useful objects, but a fierce dragon at the east end of the cave complex stops you going further. So you find a silver coin which you GIVE to a beggar. In exchange he gives you a can opener, his only valuable possession.

You TAKE the firewood from another cave and place it next to a wall of ice. Lighting a fire melts the ice which lets you into hidden cave where you find a rope. You climb DOWN a cliff where you find a tin of dragon food. Using your can opener you OPEN the tin and FEED the dragon who goes to sleep after her meal. Before leaving the caves you notice a useful looking bucket which you can FILL with water from the melted ice wall... Now you can get beyond the caves, through a wood (picking up a gold coin) and into a castle.

After a good look around you find a key and meet a wizard. You also find a locked door which the key does not open, and a kitchen that is ablaze so you cannot pass through it. The magician will sell you a magic word, 'Edro', which will open the locked door in the Great Hall. Once through that door you find a wooden chest which your key does fit, and inside there is a stick of dynamite. You take the dynamite to the kitchen where you use your bucket of water to put the fire out and move east. Outside the kitchen you find the rockfall that is blocking the river. You LIGHT the dynamite and blast the river clear!

## STEP-BY-STEP SOLUTIONS

**The following solutions are the quickest way to solve the puzzles and get to the end, but things need not be done in the specific order shown.**

---

### **‘Easy’ version**

Starting from the dry river bed go SOUTH to the village and WEST to the small house, TAKE the LAMP.

Go EAST then SOUTH to the big house and TAKE the BOX of MATCHES. Go NORTH, EAST then EAST. You will find it is too dark to see so LIGHT the LAMP.

Go SOUTH and TAKE the FIREWOOD.

Go NORTH, EAST, EAST and NORTH to the cave with the wall of ice. LIGHT a FIRE to melt the ice. You can now go NORTH to TAKE the ROPE.

Go SOUTH, SOUTH, WEST and SOUTH and you will be at a cliff edge.

Go DOWN and TAKE the TIN.

Go UP again and DROP the ROPE.

Go NORTH and NORTH again and TAKE the COIN.

Go SOUTH, WEST and then NORTH; GIVE the COIN to the beggar, he will give you a can OPENER in return.

### **‘Hard’ version**

Starting from the dry river bed go SOUTH to the village and WEST to the small house, TAKE the LAMP and TAKE the BLUE paint.

Go EAST then SOUTH to the big house and TAKE the BOX of MATCHES.

Go NORTH then EAST, NORTH and EAST. DROP the LAMP, DROP the BLUE paint and DROP the MATCHES.

Go WEST, NORTH and WEST. The old lady will give you a chicken, some grain and a fox.

Go EAST, SOUTH, EAST and EAST. DROP the GRAIN and DROP the FOX.

Go EAST and ROW the boat then go EAST and DROP the CHICKEN.

Go WEST and ROW the boat then go WEST and TAKE the FOX.

Go EAST and ROW the boat then go EAST, DROP the FOX and TAKE the CHICKEN.

Go WEST and ROW the boat then go WEST, TAKE the CORN and DROP the CHICKEN.

### **Solution to Easy version (cont.)**

OPEN the TIN and DROP the can OPENER.

Go SOUTH, EAST, EAST and SOUTH; TAKE the BUCKET.

Go NORTH and NORTH and FILL the BUCKET.

Now go SOUTH and EAST, FEED the dragon and DROP the TIN.

Go EAST and TAKE the COIN.

Go EAST, EAST and SOUTH and then BUY a SPELL. The Wizard will tell you that the magic word **Edro** opens doors.

Go NORTH and NORTH again. TAKE the KEY.

GO EAST and say EDRO. Go EAST again and UNLOCK the CHEST.

DROP the KEY and TAKE the DYNAMITE.

Go WEST, SOUTH and then SOUTH again and THROW the WATER. Finally go EAST and LIGHT the DYNAMITE!

### **Solution to Hard version (cont.)**

Go EAST and ROW the boat then go EAST and DROP the CORN.

Go WEST and ROW the boat then go WEST and TAKE the CHICKEN.

Go EAST and ROW the boat, then go EAST; you have now ferried all three objects across the river to the old woman, who gives you a red mask.

Go WEST and ROW the boat then go WEST and WEST. TAKE the BLUE paint.

Go WEST, NORTH and EAST to the workshop and LOOK. MIX PAINT and PAINT MASK; you now have a green mask.

Go WEST, SOUTH and EAST, TAKE the LAMP and TAKE the MATCHES.

Go EAST and SOUTH. DROP the MASK; the door opens.

Go EAST. You will find it is too dark to see, so LIGHT the LAMP. Go SOUTH and TAKE the FIREWOOD.

Go NORTH, EAST, EAST and NORTH to the cave with the wall of ice. LIGHT a FIRE to melt the ice. You can now go NORTH to TAKE the ROPE.

Go SOUTH, SOUTH, WEST and SOUTH and you will be at a cliff edge.

Go DOWN and TAKE the TIN.

**Solution to Hard version** (cont.)

Go UP again and DROP the ROPE.

Go NORTH and NORTH again, then TAKE the COIN.

Go SOUTH, WEST and then NORTH; GIVE the COIN to the beggar, he will give you a can opener in return.

OPEN the TIN and DROP the can OPENER.

Go SOUTH, EAST, EAST and SOUTH; TAKE the BUCKET.

Go NORTH and NORTH and FILL the BUCKET.

Now go SOUTH and EAST, FEED the dragon and DROP the TIN. Go EAST and TAKE the COIN.

Go EAST, EAST and SOUTH and then BUY a SPELL. The Wizard will tell you that the magic word **Edro** opens doors.

Go NORTH and NORTH again. TAKE the KEY.

GO EAST and say EDRO. Go EAST again and UNLOCK the CHEST.

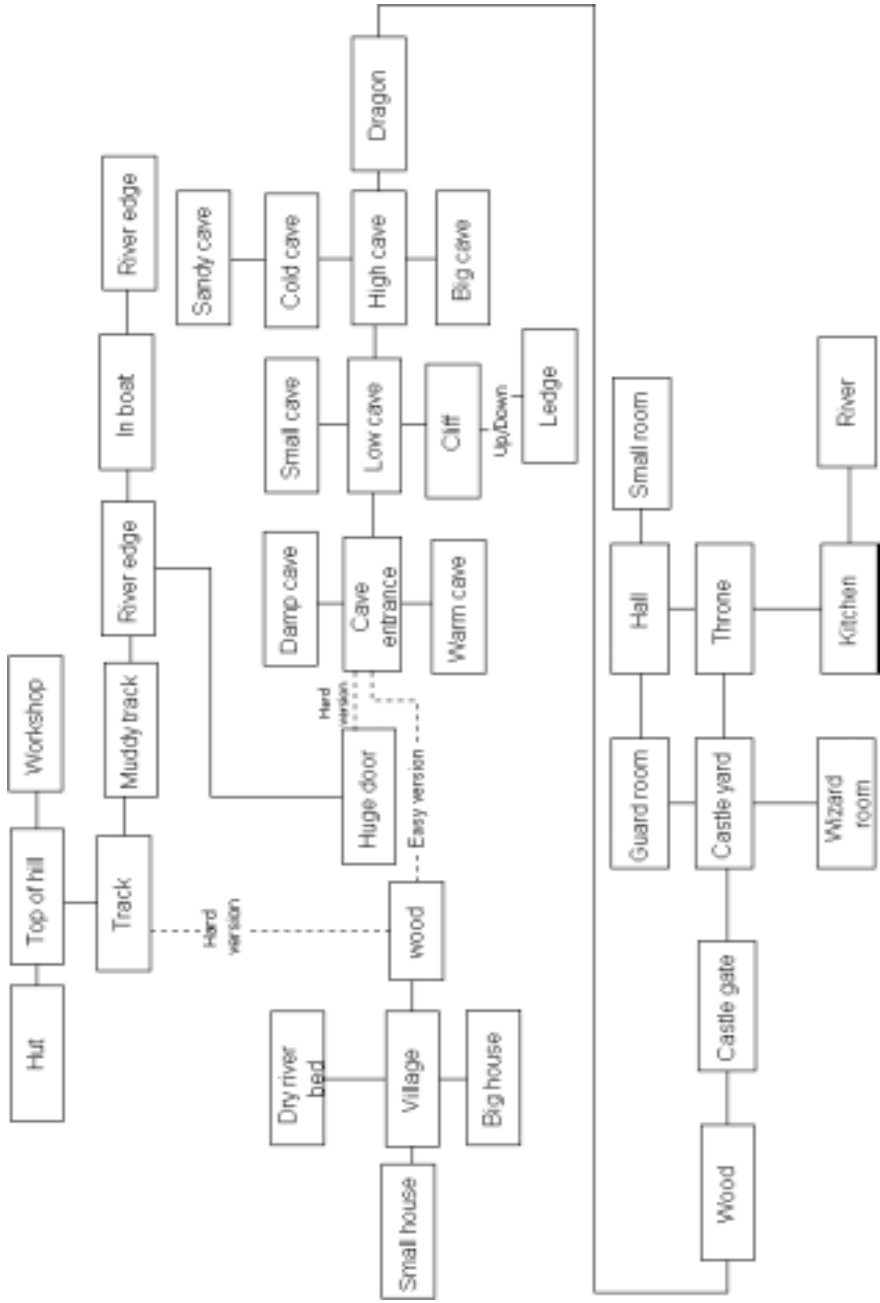
DROP the KEY and TAKE the DYNAMITE.

Go WEST, SOUTH and then SOUTH again and THROW the WATER.

Finally, go EAST and USE the DYNAMITE!



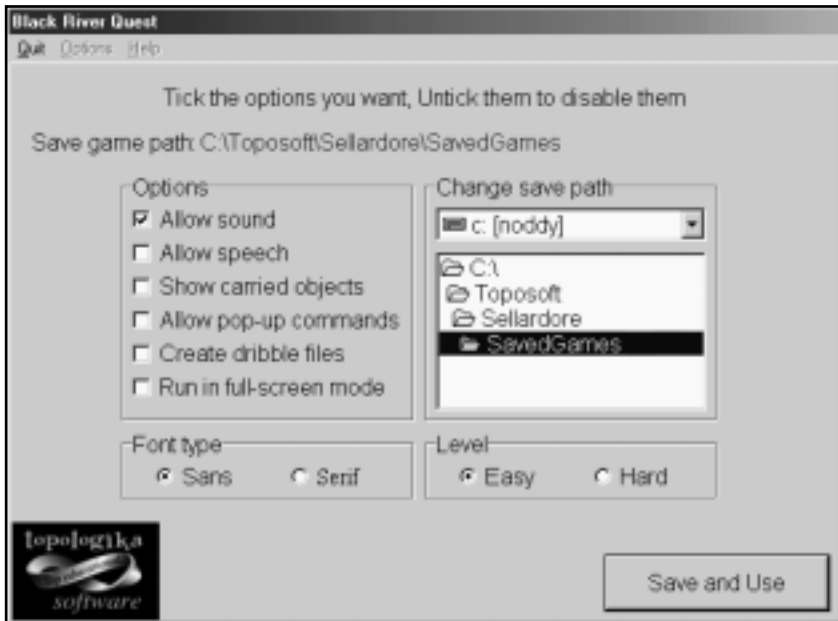
**Map showing how the 'Hard' version differs from the 'Easy' one.  
A4 versions of each are supplied separately.**



## Options

**S**ome aspects of *Black River Quest* can be changed to suit the children you will be using it with, or to change the way it works. This section explains how to set up these options. The program directory must be writable when changing them.

To get to the Options screen, click on 'Options' at the Title screen, then type in the password, which was **secret** when we supplied the pack. (You can change the password if you wish: just enter the current password, click 'Change password', then enter the new password twice to confirm. If you forget your new password, look in the file PW inside your main *Sellardore Tales* directory).



### Allow Sound

Enables you to switch the sound effects off, so that animations play in silence. When first installed, sound effects are on.

## Allow Speech

This option enables room descriptions and game responses to be read out loud. Red **Mouth** buttons will appear on the screen, one next to the location description, and one in the message box. Clicking either will speak the adjacent text, using sampled speech. When first installed this option is off.

The program will not always speak the first sentence, because this will nearly always contain children's text — and we had no way of sampling that!

Please note that the speech option and the sound effects option are independent of each other. You can have one or the other, both (or none!) enabled.

Some older computers may have problems playing both sound and speech at the same time. If this happens, we recommend you turn one or the other off.

## Show Carried Objects

With this enabled, all items being 'carried' will appear as small pictures in the object box described on page 9. If you are carrying more objects than there is room to display, scroll arrows will appear. Clicking on an object puts its name in the input box. When first installed this option is disabled.

## Allow Pop-up Commands

With this option enabled, right-clicking on the input box will display a menu of all the available commands, allowing children to select a command instead of typing it. We have included this feature mainly for children who have problems typing or who are challenged by spelling. **Please note** that as well as helping with spelling, this pop-up list provides real clues as to what needs doing and, in our opinion, detracts to a large extent from the challenge of framing language in a way the program understands. For this reason we suggest you only use this feature if children are really struggling. When first installed this option is disabled.

## Create Dribble Files

'Dribble' files are plain text files which record user inputs. We actually used this feature while developing the program, but some of the schools which tested it found 'dribbling' so useful that we have left it in. With this box ticked, the program will create dribble files in the save game folder (see below). Their names will look something like *dribble-23-Jan-02\_11-50-56.txt* (depending on how your computer is set up to display dates). These files can be loaded into and printed from *Notepad* or any other word processor. They can be useful simply to see if children have actually achieved anything, or as a record of work done for a school record keeping system. When first installed this option is disabled.

### **Run in Full-Screen Mode**

If your computer is set to use a screen mode larger than 800 x 600, the *Black River Quest* game screen will look small in relation to the total available screen area, and there will be a grey border around the edge. You can get round this by either manually switching the machine to 800 x 600 before loading the program, or by enabling this option so when you play the adventure it will automatically try to switch the machine into 800 x 600. (Please note that due to differences between the various types of hardware, this may or may not be successful. You will see an error message if it does not work, and the adventure will continue in your current screen mode. In this case if you really want to use it in 800 x 600, switch modes manually.) When first installed this option is disabled.

This option also effects the talking *Zorin* book. With this option on for *Black River Quest*, *Zorin* will **also** switch screen modes when run.

### **Font**

Sellardore defaults to a Sans-serif font (Arial) which is generally easier to read for short pieces of text. However, you have the option to use Times New Roman by selecting the Serif font.

### **Save Game Path**

The right hand area of the Options screen allows you to select the folder that saved games will be placed in and loaded from. Whichever one you choose must be writable (the program will warn you if this is not the case). See SAVE on page 11 for how to delete saved games.

### **Level**

Lets you choose between two difficulty levels (see page 10). When first installed the easy level is selected.

### **Save and Use**

Saves the options and returns you to the Title screen from where you can start the adventure.

## Vocabulary

Here are all the words the program 'knows', including synonyms:

### A

ashes  
attack

### B

Basil  
blast  
blow  
blue  
box  
bring  
bucket  
build  
burn  
buy

### C

can  
chest  
chicken  
climb  
coin  
corn

### D

down  
dragon  
drop  
dynamite

### E

East  
edro  
examine  
explore

### F

feed  
fetch  
fill  
fire  
food  
fox

### G

get  
give  
gold  
grain  
green

### H

help  
hen  
hit

### I

in  
inventory

### K

key  
kick  
kill

### L

lamp  
leave  
light  
list  
load  
look

### M

make  
mask  
matches  
melt  
mix  
money

### N

North

### O

oars  
open  
opener  
out

### P

paint  
paper  
pay  
pit  
pot  
pour  
put

### Q

quit

### R

read  
red  
rope  
row

### S

save  
search  
shack  
silver  
sly  
South  
spell  
start  
stop

### T

take  
throw  
tin

### U

unlock  
up  
use

### W

water  
wear  
West  
wood  
workshop  
writing

### Y

yellow

## ***Black River Quest* in the Classroom**

**S***ellardore Tales* could form the central theme of a topic based around the land of Sellardore, or dragons, or simply be used as an adventure in its own right to support other reading work. For those of you who may have never used this kind of adventure with children before, here are a few tips. They are taken largely from the experiences of schools which tested the program, both with the 1991 BBC version, and with this edition. We are sure you will find other ways of organising things, but this may be of help. (The support material supplied with the pack is described in the next section.)

### **INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM**

You may find that the simplest way to introduce the program is to get the class/group/child in front of the computer to show how commands are entered. However, interaction with the program is very straightforward and most children today will have no trouble with it.

### **ORGANISATION**

Experience shows it is generally best to arrange for children to explore *Black River Quest* in small groups. This is efficient and makes better use of computer time than having each user tackle the program individually. More than that though, group work can lead to a richer learning experience, because the different children in each group will each approach the task in different ways. It is good to share and talk!

You will find that *Black River Quest* can work as well with mixed-ability groups as with streamed, but you will need to ensure that no person in a group leaves the others behind. After organising the groups (a maximum four per group is recommended), computer time can be allotted to each.

### **MAKING MAPS**

The first thing children will want to do is explore at random, probably much as you did when you first used the program.

This is not necessarily a Bad Thing, and you will see from the maps we have provided (just one way of showing the geography of Sellardore) that the area to be explored is fairly straightforward, and bigger in the 'Hard' version than in the 'Easy'. Eventually they will realise that the best way to get round the game is by making a map, and they should be encouraged to do so.

Children invent all sorts of ways of mapping adventure games, and it can be instructive — and educationally sound — to give them free rein on this for a while. Those who find it difficult can be given the locations on cards or 'PostIt' notes which can then be arranged to make sense. Failing that, use the maps supplied, asking children to fill in the blanks as they explore the adventure. (Make sure the difficulty level of the map you give them matches the level set for the game — each map carries the word 'Hard' or 'Easy').

Map-makers can be asked to explain how their maps work before the group perhaps agrees to adopt a particular method.

## **SOLVING THE PROBLEMS**

There are two obvious approaches to solving the problems. One is to have groups working in competition with each other, and the other is for each group to share their findings with the others as they go along, even, as above, building up a single map for everyone to refer to.

Whatever decision you come up with need not be fixed for ever; you could, for example, start with groups working in competition and switch to sharing as and when things get tricky or time begins to run out.

## **WORK AWAY FROM THE COMPUTER**

Much of the work on *Black River Quest* can and should be carried on away from the computer. Rough maps may be tidied up, and notes taken during the computer session should be reviewed for further clues. This will help speed things up the next time the children use the software.

The fox, chicken, and grain problem in the 'Hard' version lends itself to being solved separately. This could be done individually on paper with a few counters, but you could also make it a task that the whole group tackles, maybe as a Drama session.

## OTHER IDEAS

### Choose your own adventure books

You might like to consider the Oxford University Press *Quest Game Books* which operate in a similar environment to *Black River Quest*. These are 'choose your own adventure' style books in two sets of six. Many similar books are available now and it is difficult to sort through them all, but those by Ian Livingstone are good and are available in 'multi-player' form.

There are also numerous books on dragons, Orks etc. and you should have no trouble resourcing any project based on these. You will find a wealth of information in role-playing source books published by the likes of TSR, Games Workshop, Palladium, Chaosium etc. These books tend to be available in large toy shops rather than book shops, and through the various publishers' web sites.

### Board games

There are a range of board games you might like to look at, though you would probably have to make some modifications to run them in a school environment.

The great thing about some of these games is that combine literacy and numeracy skills with problem solving. As we write, the *Lord of the Rings* film has given rise to an excellent game, but this is a very volatile market and games go in and out of print a lot. The links below are a good place to start:

<http://www.spiritgames.co.uk>

UK based suppliers of board games. Helpful staff. Has a good range of second hand games: look out for Talisman and Heroquest.

<http://www.games-web.co.uk>

Another UK supplier with a wide range and a great searchable index. Gives recommended ages and playing times. Try a search on 'dragons'.

<http://www.games-workshop.com>

Games Workshop are a major producer of fantasy games, though they can be very complex. They also supply fantasy figures for painting.

### Other computer adventures

If you or your children get bitten by the adventure bug there are actually lots of other adventures available, including *Stig of the Dump* and our classic *GiantKiller* maths adventure pack. Like *Sellardore* these are targeted at



particular age and ability ranges. The Software section of our website ([www.topologika.com](http://www.topologika.com)) describes these in full.

It also has links to some even older adventure programs. Personally, we love those by Topologika (who in another incarnation published classic text adventures like *Countdown to Doom*, *Philosopher's Quest* and *Acheton*) and Scott Adams. Check the Links section of [www.topologika.com](http://www.topologika.com) for where to find these games these days. Marshal Anderson used some of them very successfully with year six children as part of a problem-solving project.

The Adventure Collective (<http://www.adventurecollective.com>) is a great all-purpose adventure game site with links, reviews and so on. It is a good place to start finding out more about the ever-popular world of 'interactive fiction'.

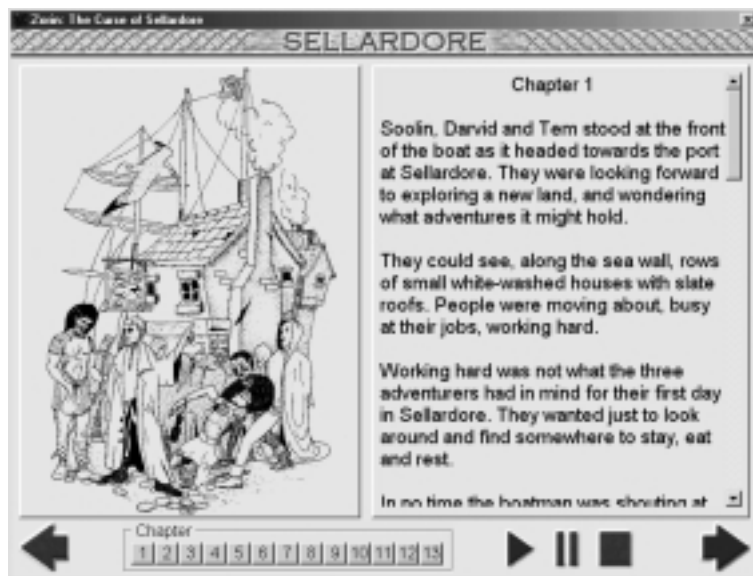
## Black River Quest Support Material

The package includes a number of different kinds of resource materials which are intended to extend the work the children can get from both the reading book and the computer adventure, and to stretch the I.C.T. they can achieve.

### TALKING BOOK — ZORIN, THE CURSE OF SELLARDORE

The *Sellardore Tales* software also includes a simple ‘talking book’ which allows children to listen to *Zorin, the Curse of Sellardore* at the computer.

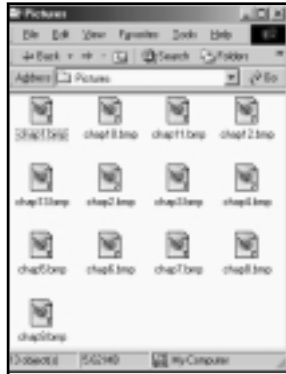
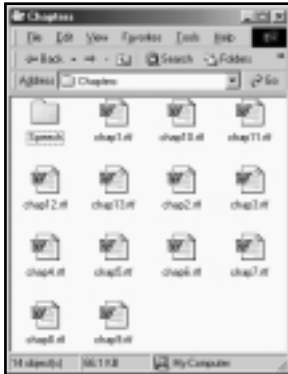
From the opening page the simple controls allow them to jump to any chapter. The program provides basic **Play**, **Pause** and **Stop** buttons for the speech, and the text of each chapter is presented in a scrollable window:



If *Black River Quest* is configured to switch screen modes, the talking book will do the same. See page 20 for more information.

## TEXT AND IMAGE FILES

The CD contains the text of each chapter and image in the ‘Zorin’ story book. You will find them in Pictures and Chapters folders in the main Sellardore folder. Network users will probably want to copy these folders into children’s work areas rather than give them direct access to the Sellardore folder.



Each chapter is a Rich Text Format (.rtf) file which will load into most word processors, and each image is a bitmap (.bmp file) for most paint packs.

They can be dragged and dropped into the relevant pack, or loaded via the pack’s File > Open menu.

### Ideas for children

Children could reprint chapters after using Search and Replace to put their own or alternative names into the text instead of Soolin, Tem, Darvid, Sneck and Zorin. Beware of their respective genders!

They can re-write part or all of the book. To keep the reading age down, fairly simple words have been used with a fair amount of repetition. More able children could replace some of these with more sophisticated language. Alternatively, if there are events that they do not like they could totally change them: What if Sneck was a spy for Zorin? What if they had not rescued Soolin? The endings are endless!

A still more sophisticated use of the text would be to re-write it in the first person. This might be a useful exercise for ESL. students.

The character Sneck speaks in very broken English, and therefore, a useful exercise might be for the children to try to express what she is saying using better language. This could be done as either a written or oral exercise.

## Ideas for teachers

Create your own Cloze procedure sheets based on the text, or reprint chapters with specific gaps left for children to illustrate.

Use our support pack ***textThing*** (a separate purchase) to create on-screen cloze exercises using Zorin files, as well as rebuilding the text letter by letter or punctuation mark by punctuation mark, unscrambling words, locating the only sensible sentence among several scrambled ones, spelling tests, on-screen sentence sequencing and an unlimited number of printable crosswords and word searches. Check [www.topologika.com](http://www.topologika.com) for full details of this clever pack!

## ACTIVITY SHEETS

Twenty activity sheets are provided, each covering a range of activities:

### **Sheets 1-13 — Various**

These sheets each cover a specific part of the reading book or the whole of the computer program; you will find this information on them.

***Cloze procedure sheets:*** These are in a standard format and can be used as they are. You may like to cover the word list at the base of each when you copy them, in order to make each task more demanding.

***Word searches:*** When copying these, again you may wish to cover the word list. The directions the words run have been limited to horizontally left to right, vertically downwards, and diagonally left to right and down.

***Crosswords:*** These use words in the given chapters together with other common words.

***Sequencing:*** The children cut the sentences out as indicated and stick them onto a separate sheet in a meaningful order. Alternatively you may want them to write the sentences in the correct order.

### **Sheet 14 — Descriptions**

Here we are looking at children's ability first to identify adjectives in the book and then to extend them into their own vocabulary. Skills include close reading and re-reading. This will also help develop creative writing skills.

### **Sheet 15 — Make a poster**

This sheet asks children to look deeper into the text, to draw inferences and

re-present in an alternative form the functions of the characters. Skills include skimming and scanning, recall, inference and deduction, and recalling and understanding plot. It brings opportunities for DTP and related IT skills.

### **Sheet 16 – Soolin’s point of view**

This asks first for a thorough re-reading of chapter 7, after which children need to explore the idea of first-person language and how that differs from the language in the book. Finally they need to infer a certain amount from the book when trying to re-construct things from a different perspective. It provides an opportunity to look into Soolin’s thought-processes, either via Drama or more simply through recounting personal experiences of events. Specific skills include close reading, inference and deduction, plot and character, re-telling and writing.

### **Worksheet 17 – Recipes for Spells**

You will probably want chapter 8 reviewed (in which Tem casts a spell) before children attempt this sheet. It asks readers to recognise the structure of the spell and expand it in detail through imaginative writing. Building on the skills of close reading and re-telling, this sheet provides an opportunity for them to move beyond the book using their own creativity.

### **Worksheet 18 – What are they Like?**

The first part of this sheet is about looking back through the book for clues about each character. It requires a combination of scanning and close reading as well as memory. The second engages imaginative thinking – filling out the characters and trying to identify them with ‘real’ people. In terms of who might play the parts of these characters, we have purposefully left it vague – children may immediately think of current film stars, but they might just as easily be directed towards friends, family, etc.

### **Worksheet 19 – What are they Thinking?**

Again we are reviewing the whole book, so the skill-set is the same as for sheet 18. This time children need to go much further – looking for inferences, and filling out characters’ motivations that are not explicit. It provides opportunities for Drama as well as looking at what children think of each other, and why.

### **Worksheet 20 – Solving Problems**

Back to the plot with this one. Recall, scanning then close reading followed by writing are the skills uppermost in this sheet. The problems can be found in chapters 1, 6, 8 and 9 respectively.

## CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

### Activity Sheet 4

#### **Across**

- 5 taking
- 6 only
- 7 centre
- 8 time
- 9 keyhole
- 12 grew
- 14 ground
- 16 into
- 17 needed

#### **Down**

- 1 late
- 2 little
- 3 lost
- 4 climb
- 10 looked
- 11 wrong
- 13 wood
- 15 need

### Activity Sheet 10

#### **Across**

- 5 were
- 6 table
- 8 stop
- 9 others
- 11 sent
- 12 strong
- 13 most
- 15 crops
- 16 land

#### **Down**

- 1 went
- 2 people

- 3 each
- 4 Eldren
- 7 got
- 10 waters
- 11 simple
- 14 sent

### Activity Sheet 13

#### **Across**

- 6 inside
- 7 hard
- 9 pile
- 10 everyone
- 11 Deeps
- 12 happy
- 16 years
- 17 began
- 20 Could not
- 22 burn
- 23 fist
- 24 enough

#### **Down**

- 1 Once
- 2 river
- 3 several
- 4 They
- 5 wrong
- 8 mines
- 13 pie
- 14 grinned
- 15 hairy
- 18 Zorin
- 19 stood
- 21 late
- 22 bags

## Reading Age

**T**his is always a controversial area and you will know best who will benefit from using part or all of *Sellardore Tales*. However, to give you some sort of objective guide we have run two reading level tests.

The first is the **Mugford Reading Difficulty Level** which is widely believed to be reliable for primary and lower secondary aged children as well as remedial texts. The second is the **Flesch Grade** which is much less reliable on these sort of texts but is commonly used in secondary schools and so should give a starting point for teachers working in Special Needs departments. The standard deviation within the *Zorin* book is also shown to give you some idea of the boundaries within which the text stays.

The text analysed was 1400 words from the reader (the first 200 words of the first seven chapters), and all of the messages and room descriptions in the program.

### **‘Zorin, the Curse of Sellardore’ — Reader**

Mugford Reading Difficulty Level:	8.26	Standard deviation: 0.6
Flesch Grade:	10.96	Standard deviation: 0.5

### **Black River Quest — Computer Adventure**

Mugford Reading Difficulty Level:	7.48	
Flesch Grade:	9.67	(Off the scale at the easy end.)

## Troubleshooting

**T**his section may just get you out of trouble without having to ring us. If you do need to call, please bear in mind that telephone customer support is only available from 0930 to 1300 work days. You can fax or email us at any time. Please be sure to describe the problem as fully as possible and to give your contact address/fax number.

**The program doesn't start correctly or the animations don't work**  
See page 5

**How do I delete Saved Game files?**  
See page 11

**I've forgotten my password**  
See page 18

**The program won't switch screen modes automatically**  
See page 20

**I've turned sound and speech on, but the effects don't sound right**  
Some older computers may have problems playing both sound and speech at the same time. If this happens, turn one or the other off.

**The pop-up command list displays incorrectly on some screens**  
The complexity animations when run on slower computers can sometimes cause this. The solution is as follows:

Close all running programs (including the adventure), and right-click on an empty area of the desktop. Choose Properties from the menu that pops up then, on the resulting screen, choose the Effects tab. Depending on your version of Windows, untick either 'Animate windows, menus and lists' or 'Use transition effects for menus and tooltips'. Click OK, and the popup commands should now display correctly on all screens.