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Tuesday, May 24, 2005

Christian company's first title focuses on character values, not God

By Jinny Gudmundsen / Gannett News Service



"Adventures in Odyssey and the Treasure of the Incas" is an exciting, wholesome mystery game from Digital Praise, a new Christian entertainment company.

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This computer game does not contain any direct references to God. Instead, it focuses on providing unique educational activities and a storyline that reinforces character values such as trust and helping others.

However, parents should know that Digital Praise promotes itself as seeking "to glorify God" and "spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ" through its programs. This is apparent in the game's "Extra Features" section, where kids can listen to an audio episode called "The Cross of Cortez" from the Christian radio series "Adventures in Odyssey." You and your kids should skip this software if you're uncomfortable with its religious undertones and bonus content.

The software adventure involves helping teenagers Eugene and Connie, and their employer, Mr. Whittaker ("Whit"), solve a mystery about a map to the lost treasure of the Incas. While solving the mystery, Eugene must cope with uncomplimentary rumors about his parents, two famous archeologists, who disappeared when he was 7.

Players help solve the mystery by making decisions for the trio of Eugene, Connie and Whit. It's up to the player to decide when to switch between different members of the trio and what decisions to make for each.

The mystery is compelling, but the eight innovative logic puzzles woven into the storyline make this an excellent educational title. Kids decode journals, create inventions and solve a puzzle by placing prisms in a manner that will refract a light beam so that it can open four doors. These logic puzzles automatically adjust in difficulty as the player proceeds through the game. Youngsters also can practice the puzzles separately from playing the game.

Unfortunately, this title includes little racial diversity because the main characters are all white. Some secondary characters are Hispanic, but the title doesn't include any blacks, Asians or other diverse groups.

Score: 4 stars (out of 5)

Best for ages 8 to 12

From Digital Praise, www.digitalpraise.com, \$30, Windows and Macintosh.

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---- *Gudmundsen is the editor of Computing With Kids magazine*
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