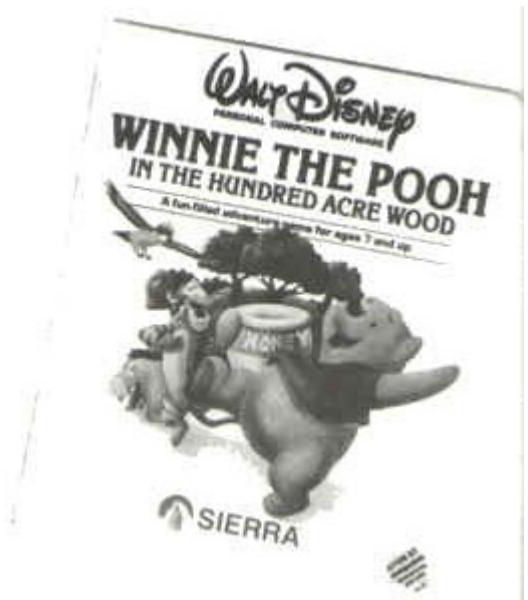


Winnie The Pooh



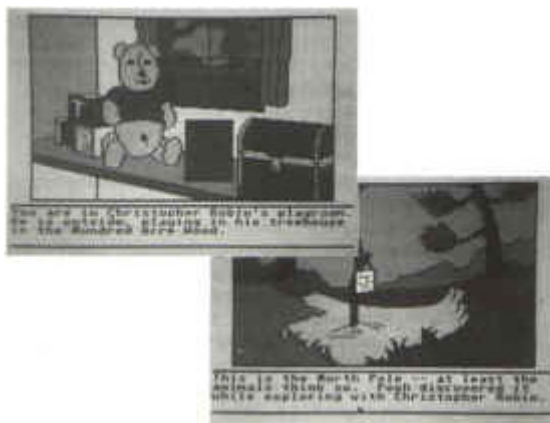
Issue 21 May/Jun 86
Sierra On-Line £34.95

There has always been a curious gap in the market for children's software with a fair amount of pre-school programs and a sprinkling of Secondary school material but very little for the 'middle years'. The reason is that it is probably a very difficult age group to write for with a delicate balance required between games or programs that are too simple and thus easily boring and those that are too difficult and thus easily boring! In the film world, the most successful company to produce children's films must be Walt Disney and Walt Disney and Sierra have combined their knowledge to produce Winnie The Pooh in The Hundred Acre Wood, a 'fun-filled adventure game for ages 7 and up'.



Winnie The Pooh runs on both monochrome and colour systems and uses the mouse almost exclusively so that it is very easy for a child to make his or her way through the game. The story is that 10 objects belonging to various characters in the Pooh books have been blown about by The Blustery Wind and scattered all over the Hundred Acre Wood. The task is to find each one of these objects and return them to their rightful owner, but first you will have to work out who that owner is! Each time the game is played different objects are used and are scattered in different places so no two games are the same. The Hundred Acre Wood is not over large and can thus be easily mapped out by older children but it is just as easy to wander around and chance on things, you will come to no harm.

At each location choices are given on screen of various possible actions such as direction movements or talking to characters or just 'thinking' or 'doing nothing'. Each response is just pointed to with the mouse and the button clicked to execute. Although this is very easy, children are encouraged to think throughout with simple logic puzzles to solve such as working out who the items belong to. If you are stuck you can go and visit Owl who will look at the object and give you a few clues! Other uses of logic come in how to put down objects when there is already something in that spot as only one object at a time can be in any one location. Quite easy for adults but a good problem for children to work out for themselves. There are frustrations too as you would expect from an adventure! Happily (and rightly) you cannot be killed but just when you think you are doing well Tigger may come along and 'bounce' you all over the wood making you lose whatever you were carrying, and occasionally The Mist will come down. You have to wander around waiting for the mist to clear and when it does who knows where you will be! Finally there is the Blustery Wind which, as well as blowing at the beginning of the game, may come back and blow all the objects about again, just when you thought you knew where they were!



The game is full of humour, some very corny, some very funny but all at a level which children will love. The pictures are excellent and there is sound with a couple of songs included. Games can be saved if required by older children or by parents of younger children, although you may be surprised at what young children can learn and cope with, but quite often a game can be completed in a couple of hours giving a nice sense of achievement. Although aimed at 7 years old and up it will provide a great deal of enjoyment for even younger children if played by a parent asking their child 'What shall we do now?' and thus it is an ideal game for all ages.

Overall the game is excellent, marrying together Sierra's skills at adventure writing with Walt Disney's understanding of children. A friend of mine who has a young daughter says she will play this for hours on end and she has previously found computers 'boring'. What better recommendation can you get?

Winnie The Pooh is available from Software Express in Birmingham who kindly loaned the review copy.