The BBC and Adventure Rock: experimenting with content for children

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working with Jeanette Steemers (University of Westminster)
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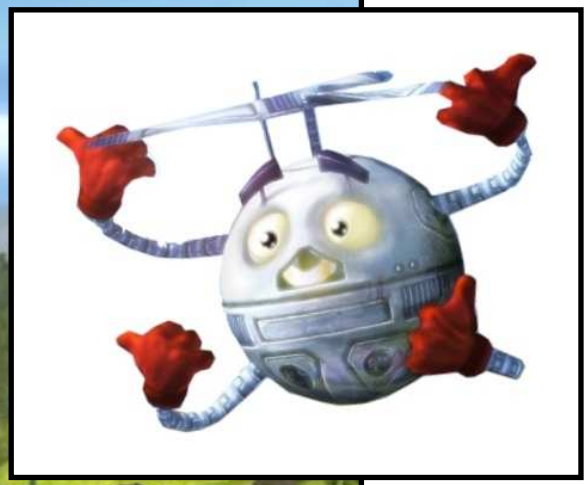
The growth of virtual worlds for children

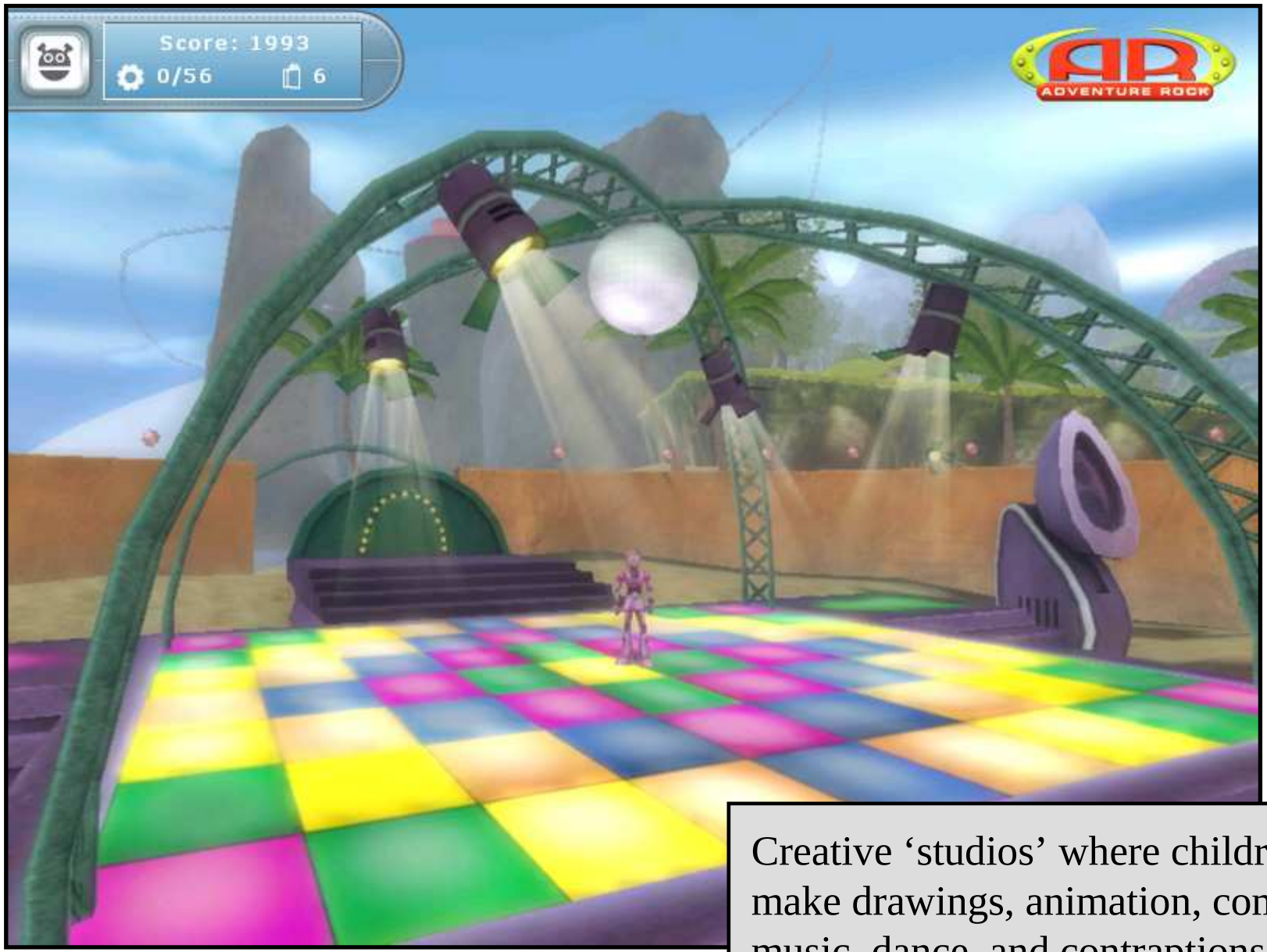
1993	**CitySpace** [sort of virtual world]
1999	**Neopets** (Viacom) [sort of virtual world]
2000	**Habbo Hotel** (Sulake)
2004	**Ketnet Kick** (Larian)
2005	**Virtual Magic Kingdom** (Disney)
2005	**WebKinz** (Ganz)
2007	**Club Penguin** (Disney)
2007	**Nicktropolis** (Nickelodeon)
2008	**Moshi Monsters** (Mindcandy)
2008	**Adventure Rock** (BBC)
2008	**My Tiny Planets** (Peppers Ghost)
2009	**Lego Universe** (Lego)

Adventure Rock: a virtual world (or 'game'?) for children aged around 7 – 11

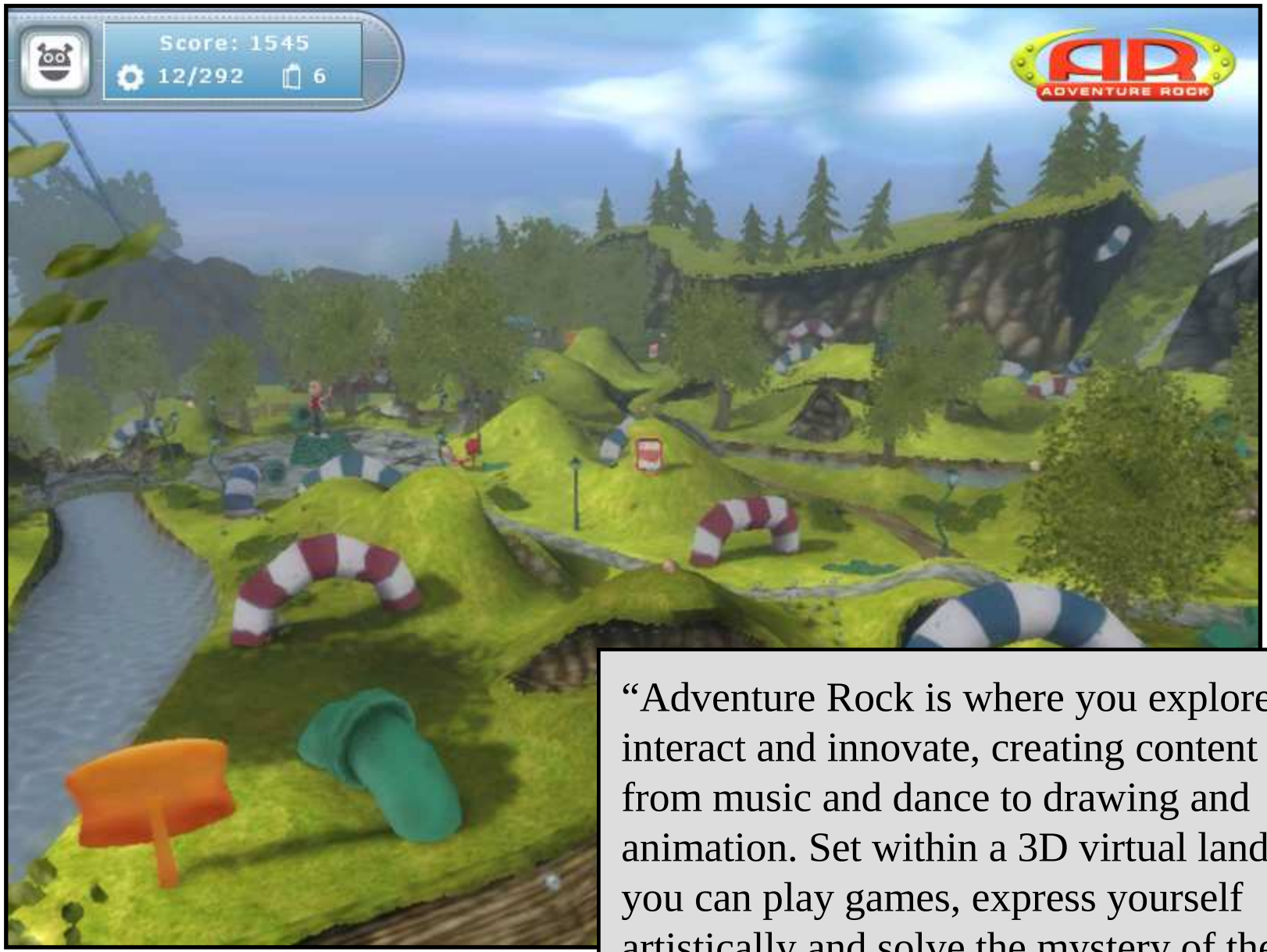


An island with different zones and levels.
But no social interaction within the world – visitors play alone (but helped by a ‘friendly robot’).

Free from CBBC website. It's a downloaded program, rather than running on the Web.



Creative ‘studios’ where children can make drawings, animation, comic strip, music, dance, and contraptions



"Adventure Rock is where you explore, create, interact and innovate, creating content ranging from music and dance to drawing and animation. Set within a 3D virtual landscape, you can play games, express yourself artistically and solve the mystery of the island."

Screens within the world where children can watch daily *Adventure Rock* news, CBBC content, and selected work by other children from the studios

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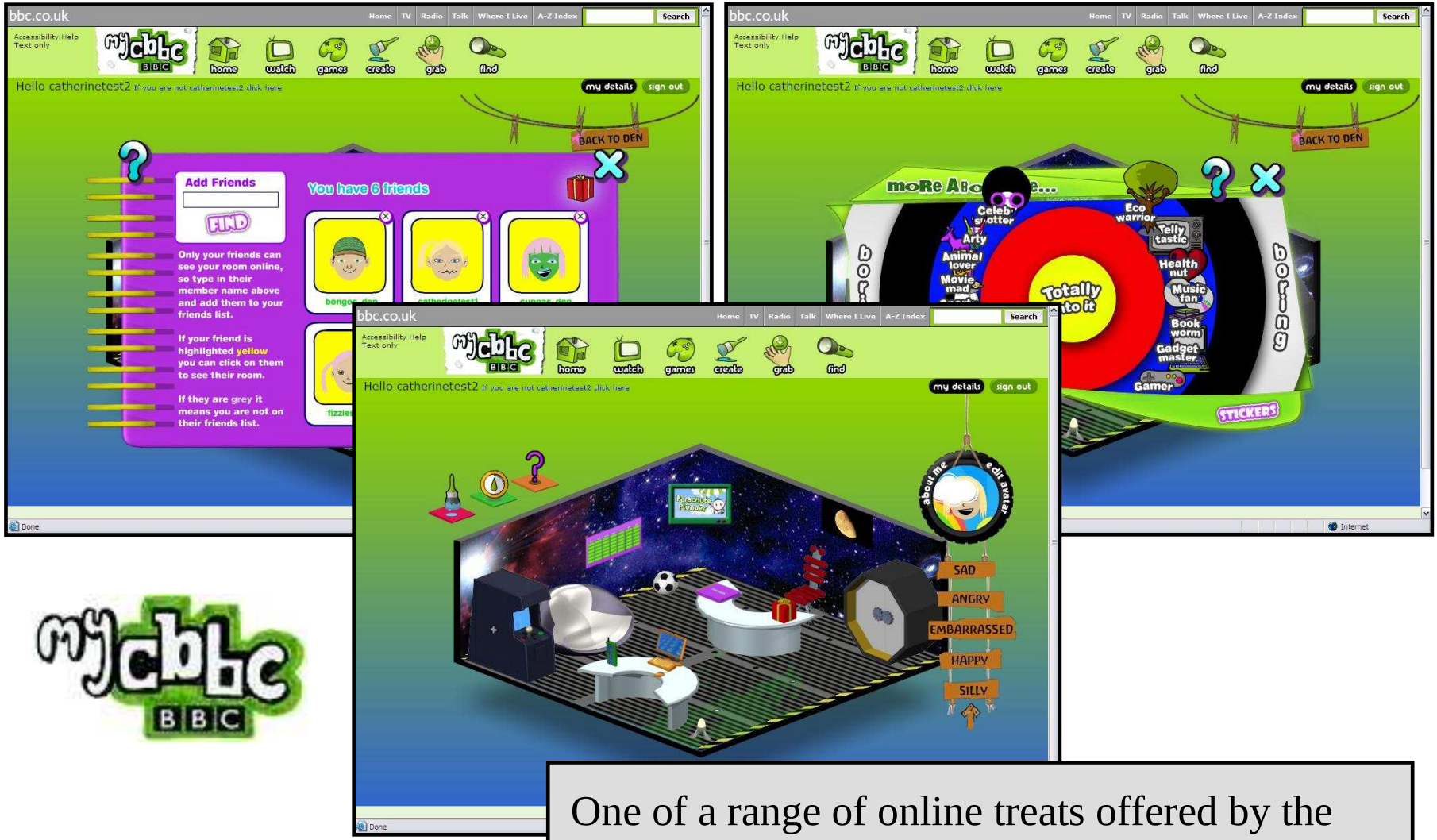

One of a range of online treats offered by the CBBC website, including *My CBBC*, a social network / bookmarking / self-expression site

Accessibility Help
Text only
Sound off
Freeze background
cbbc BBC
home
watch
games
create
grab
find
Message Boards
view all websites
be on a show
watch
See the best clips from CBBC here every single day. Check out the shows you've missed, today's highlights and exclusive previews!
Catch Up
Stitch Up
Newsflash
Adventure Rock
Coming Soon
Raven: The Secret Temple
AR ADVENTURE ROCK
explore
Be On A Show
get involved
tv on the web
cbbc extra
the vault
your movies
pedro
my cbbc BBC
CBBC Help

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www.childreninvirtualworlds.org.uk

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SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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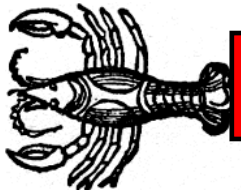
EIGHT TYPES OF PLAYER

(or, EIGHT DIFFERENT ORIENTATIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT)

Explorer-investigators

Self-stampers

Social climbers



Fighters

Collector-consumers

Power users

Life-system builders

Nurturers

Eight types of player...

Explorer-investigators

- ***Interested in:*** Following a quest, solving a mystery, going on a journey, being 'outdoors'
- ***Likely to be:*** The more confident children, no age or gender difference
- ***Characteristics:*** Examines the detail, curious and communicative, imaginative engagement with the mystery

Self-stampers

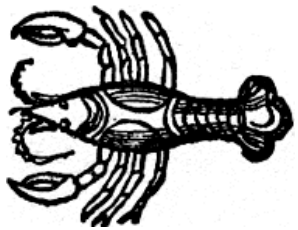
- ***Interested in:*** Presenting themselves in the world
- ***Likely to be:*** Both genders, possibly more older children
- ***Characteristics:*** Boys and girls wanted to 'make their mark' on their avatar, and perhaps have their own face on there; older girls wanted dress her up and have a make-up studio in *Adventure Rock*. Both boys and girls wanted to express themselves through the creation of a home/base

Eight types of player...

Social climbers

- ***Interested in:*** Ranking, social position within the environment
- ***Likely to be:*** Both younger and older children; only some gender bias (boys slightly more than girls)
- ***Characteristics:*** Competitive; concerned with ranking and exhibiting that ranking to others

Fighters



- ***Interested in:*** Death and destruction, violence, and superpowers
- ***Likely to be:*** Male, slight bias towards older boys
- ***Characteristics:*** In *Adventure Rock*, frustrated that they did not have a means to express themselves, with the exception of beating the crocodiles

Eight types of player...

Collector-consumers

- ***Interested in:*** Accumulating anything of perceived value within the system
- ***Likely to be:*** Older boys and girls
- ***Characteristics:*** Collects pages and coins. Wanted *Adventure Rock* to have shops, enable *gift-giving*, establish an economic system, and have somewhere to put things

Power users

- ***Interested in:*** Giving everyone the benefit of their knowledge and experience
- ***Likely to be:*** Expert in the games, the geography of the environment, the systems
- ***Characteristics:*** Spent more than three hours at a time playing/exploring *Adventure Rock*. An interest in how the game works

Eight types of player...

Life-system builders

- ***Interested in:*** Creating new lands, new elements to the environment, populating the environment
- ***Likely to be:*** Younger children (imagined worlds without any rules), and older children (imagined worlds with rules and systems – houses, schools, shops, transport, economy)
- ***Characteristics:*** In *Adventure Rock*, frustrated that they did not have a means to express themselves

Nurturers

- ***Interested in:*** Looking after their avatar, and pets
- ***Likely to be:*** Younger boys and girls, and older girls
- ***Characteristics:*** Wanted to meet and play with others. Wanted to teach their avatar to swim, and somewhere for the avatar to sleep. Wanted pets to look after

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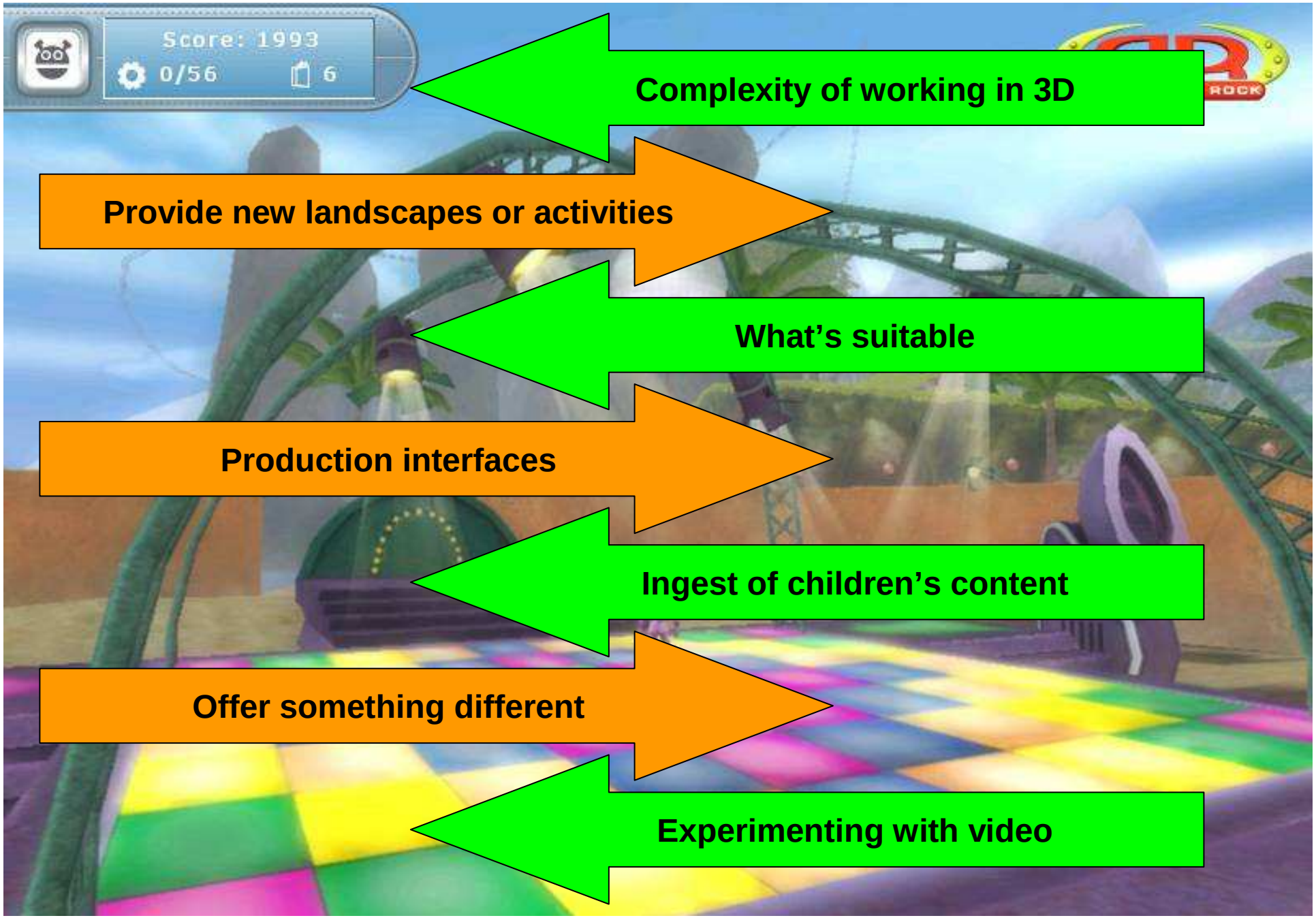

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Thirteen principles for a successful virtual world for children

1. **Sociable – meeting and chatting**
2. **Creative – making avatar, making things** ✓
3. **Control – owning and changing the space**
4. **A big, outdoors world to explore** ✓
5. **Visible status – how am I doing?** ✓
6. **Clear location – where am I? + easy transport** ✓
7. **Mission and motivation – what's the purpose?** ✓
8. **Some humour** ✓
9. **Help when you need it** ✓
10. **Chance to see professional video, their own work, and other children's** ✓
11. **Somewhere to live – a home, hotel or town**
12. **Shops – buying stuff**
13. **A space away from adult rules (as seen in: everything chocolate!)** ✓

The value of virtual worlds for children

1. A playful, engaging, interactive alternative to more passive media
2. Becoming a creator and having control over elements of a world
3. Creating mental maps, exploring, and understanding a new world and its systems (e.g. transport, money)
4. Rehearsing having responsibilities, looking after things
5. Learning social skills
6. Playing with identity, e.g. dressing up
7. A tool for self-expression
8. Computer literacy