

# David's Starship Traveller Adventure Game Book

Duration • 7:27

**David** 00:00

Hello, my name is David Johnson and I'm a freelance filmmaker from Chatteris. This is my item for the Mantelpiece project and it is called Starship Traveller by Steve Jackson, which is an adventure game book. And it was printed in 1983, has been produced until fairly recently. This particular one is number four. The first one was called The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain, which was groundbreaking in its format, which was roleplay Dungeons & Dragons, but in a book form.

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This one, Starship Traveller, is space-based. And there's a whole series of them, The Citadel Of Chaos, The Forest Of Doom, City Of Thieves, and so on. These were massive back in the '80s. And it's quite a simple, simple concept. It's in a book form, but it's a Choose Your Own Adventure. If you've never come across these before, the story is broken down into paragraphs. Each one is numbered and it gives you a description of...of what is happening where you are. And then you have a choice or an outcome. And you have to make a decision by rolling dice or throwing a coin. And it helps you steer your way through the adventure. And it happens back and forth, you know, so it's not a linear storyline. This was something that was explored by Netflix for the Black Mirror series for the episode called Bandersnatch, where it took the idea of a Choose Your Own Adventure book of the same name from the '80s. And then these characters then follow the same sort of pattern. And you, as an audience member, you get to choose the outcome of the characters that choose your route, so you have some kind of influence, which technically is fantastic. And it's interesting to how, in 40 years, or...that's gone from a book thing into a TV series, it's taken that long to actually get to that format.

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So, why is this important to me? And why is it important to my life? Well, this came about in the early '80s, where computer games were just beginning to develop. You know, the first gaming computers were '82, '83, '84 that were affordable. And this was part of my childhood where gaming and programming, computer programming, and writing was just starting to take off. I was learning how to code and how to write adventure games. And this was one of the formats that helped me start, because it was structured, it was small passages, it was taking an item and then using it somewhere else. So, it was just a way of helping develop my imagination for this. Part of it was the writing side of it. This helped me to develop my writing skills. And it helped me create ideas and characters and scenarios by putting them into a nice concise item, into pieces, which I was then able to then develop over the years to now where I write a lot of scripts, which is, in some respects, very similar to this original format.

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So, how does this represent me? I think, for me, I have a condition called dyspraxia or... It's not severe, it's a mild form of dyspraxia, with a bit of dyslexia thrown in, and it's not enough to be a massive problem. It wasn't something that caused big issues during schooling, but it was enough to make it uncomfortable, make it difficult. And one of the things I've learned in my later years of when I was

diagnosed, and I then started to look into it what it means is that my brain doesn't work in a logical order. Things are out of sequence, things don't mean the same, I make connections in different ways. And that's part of why I have become a writer, become an artist, because it helps me see the world in a different format. This book represents my...the way my brain works, because it's nonlinear. It doesn't go from one to another. Everything is packaged differently, it's all hidden, it's all jumbled around. Things come to the top when they're needed to. And it's a non-logical place to live in. And this book kind of sums that all up.

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Because each of the paragraphs are in small, small sections – that was one of the things that I had problems with dyslexia and dyspraxia was that I had difficulty reading, it was hard work to read and it took a lot of energy. So, having short pieces was very...perfect, it was perfect for my kind of reading style. So, it helped encourage and develop my reading, whereas big...big books was quite a struggle. So, it helped in so many different ways.

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Yes, this book has meant a lot to me, or certainly this series has meant a lot to me. You know, I think...I don't know where I would have been if it hadn't, hadn't have come along. I don't think it would have inspired me to have followed my path, the choices that I've made in my life. This is my item to put forward onto the mantelpiece.

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And I hope other people discover this. I think it's a format that's been around for a while and it's going to stay around for a while. It's... It'll certainly help new generations of kids to understand planning and programming, logic, problem-solving, puzzles, creativity, there's just so much in there and just being able to explore and lose yourself in for a couple hours at a time. So, this is my item for the mantelpiece – The Starship Traveller. Thank you for listening, and I hope you get a chance to discover it and have a go yourself.