A research report says that virtual worlds can be important places where children practice what they will do in real life. They are also a powerful and attractive alternative to more passive adventures like watching TV. The research was done with children using the BBC’s Adventure Rock virtual world, aimed at those aged 6-12. It surveyed and interviewed children who were the first to test the game.

The online world is a theme island built for the BBC’s children channel by Belgian game maker Larian. Children explore the world alone but they use message boards to share what they find and what they do in the different creative studios they find around the virtual space.

At times children were explorers and at others they were social climbers eager to connect with other players. Some were power users looking for more information about how the virtual space really worked. The children could try all kinds of things without having to be afraid of the consequences that would follow if they tried them in the real world. They learned many useful social skills and played around with their identity in ways that would be much more difficult in real life.

According to the study what children liked about virtual worlds was the chance to create content such as music, cartoons and videos.

The publishers of the report say that virtual worlds can be a powerful, engaging and real interactive alternative to more passive media. They urged creators of virtual spaces for children to get young people involved very early on because they really do have good ideas to add and they are very good critical friends.

**Words**

- according = as shown by someone or said by someone
- aim = target
- attractive = here: to have good qualities
- connect = meet
- consequences = result, outcome
- content = here: facts, ideas, opinions
- creator = a person who makes something
- eager = ready, waiting to do something
- engaging = here: to make interesting
- explore = to travel around a place and find out things about it
- involved = here: to make young people play the game
- power user = here: a child who plays a lot with the game
- publisher = person who shows the report to the people
- research = the study of a subject to find out new facts about it
- social skills = things that you will need when you later work with or get into contact with other people
- survey = to ask people about what they think
- theme island = here: an island with many different topics
- urge = tell someone to do something
- useful = things that you can use
- virtual space = a world that is not real
1. **Answer the questions**

Which programme was used for the survey? ________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

How old were the children? ________________________________________________________________

What were the children able to do in the online world? __________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

According to the text why is it safe to move through such an online world? __________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

What did the children like about online worlds? _______________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

What do the publishers of the report recommend? ______________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

2. **True or False**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online worlds are an attractive alternative to watching TV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers from 12 upwards test the game.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can use message boards to get into contact with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding information was what children liked most in the game.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The publishers of the report recommend game makers to make games for young people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The game was made by the BBC.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are afraid to do things that are dangerous in the game.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Do you have a favourite online game? Write about it. Do you think online games are dangerous? Do they influence how you think and behave in the real world? Write a short essay.
**Key**

*True or False*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online worlds are an attractive alternative to watching TV.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers from 12 upwards test the game.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children can use message boards to get into contact with others.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding information was what children liked most in the game.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The publishers of the report recommend game makers to make games for young people.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The game was made by the BBC.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are afraid to do things that are dangerous in the game.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>