

■ Tekst 9

## Giga-what? Barbie Gets Her Own Computer

by Ophira Edut

1 IN FALL 1999, Mattel began marketing two different versions of a home computer. For fellas, a Hot Wheels system, decorated in you-bet-I'm-a-straight-boy blue, and covered with flames. For girls, there's a Barbie version, which is silver and covered in pink and purple flowers. Then there's software that comes bundled with the package. Boys get adventure games like Oregon Trail, while girls get creative writing software and – yes – a program called "Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing."



2 Apparently, *someone* thinks the daughters of the Information Revolution need to learn a special lesson about the "proper" place for girls. Who cares if a 6-year-old girl can boot up a hard drive, design her own web page, and would rather play adrenaline-pumping action games? Mattel wants her slaving and sweating, improving her words-per-minute rate, and solidifying her chances to land a modest secretarial position when she grows up.

3 Complicating matters is the PC's extremely low price tag – \$599 – for a monitor, speakers, hard drive, and software. At such an affordable sticker price, Mattel could bring computers en masse into the homes of girls. This would be great, if the company wasn't also bringing along its own social programming – meant to pin girls firmly down in their place when they're most impressionable.

4 Do we try out the wares or eject the data? Barbie's creators present us with a difficult choice. I, for one, want to see girls become fluent in the complex language of the Computer Age. Too bad Mattel still programs in Basic.

*www.adiosbarbie.com*

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- 1p **39** ■ How does Ophira Edut deal with the subject of her article in paragraphs 1 and 2?
- A By accusing Mattel of commercial exploitation of children.
  - B By complimenting Mattel on its smart methods for selling more computers.
  - C By giving a critical description of the product that she is reviewing.
  - D By promoting a very attractive new toy for boys and girls.
- 1p **40** ■ What is Ophira Edut's final judgement about the Mattel computer for girls?
- A She concludes that girls will not be interested in the software that comes with it.
  - B She considers it a useful tool for girls to learn elementary computer skills.
  - C She is positive about its price but negative about the software provided.
  - D She only recommends it for girls who have little experience with computers.