BOARD GAME WITH LATERALLY MOVABLE PIECES

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ABSTRACT

A puzzle board game for completing puzzle pictures or patterns of animals, words, phrases, or geometric designs includes a case, a cover for the case, a card holder on the inside of the cover for holding additional game cards with various puzzle patterns imprinted thereon, intersecting tracks for supporting the lateral (left/right or up/down) movement of square or circular-shaped game playing pieces some of which have on their facing surfaces portions of the puzzle pattern or picture printed thereon, with from one to three game playing piece positions left open for determining puzzle solution degree of difficulty, and an end member attachably removably to one side of the case so that after completion of one puzzle game, the end member is removed, the playing pieces are emptied from the tracks, the playing pieces are then randomly inserted back onto the tracks, and the end member is attached to the case so that the next play of the puzzle board game can commence.
Fig. 16

Fig. 17
BOARD GAME WITH LATERALLY MOVABLE PIECES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention pertains to board games with movable pieces, and more particularly pertains to puzzle board games having laterally movable pieces that form a picture, word, phrase, or geometric pattern when successfully completed.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Board games are among the most popular types of games devised and played by children and adults as an enjoyable social amusement and a pleasurable group activity. From perennially popular board games such as Monopoly, Choc, and Risk, to more recent entrants such as Trivial Pursuit, board games are generally inexpensive means of enjoyment, relaxation, and entertainment. In addition to board games, puzzles have enjoyed a perennial popularity as a means of entertainment and enjoyment both as a family and social activity as well as a solitary pastime. Puzzles range from simple children’s puzzles of a few dozen pieces to complex, intricately configured puzzles having thousands of individual pieces that must be closely and carefully examined in order to achieve their proper interfitting arrangement. Moreover, puzzles have grown in sophistication to include three-dimensional puzzles that are built up in three-dimensional levels or tiers that form replicas or models of well known structures such as the Empire State building or the Eiffel Tower. Even the explosive dominance of computer video games among the younger set hasn’t diminished the overall popularity of board games as board games, including puzzle board games, are easily portable and can be set up and played almost anywhere as they do not require electricity. For example, board games and puzzles can be played on park benches, playgrounds, camp sites, and beaches whereas computer video games generally require access to an electrical supply and a clean, dirt-free environment for optimum operation.

[0003] For example, the Mellor patent (U.S. Pat. No. 3,814,433) discloses a board game wherein small metal balls are placed in grooves of different lengths with each groove having an opposed pocket with the object of the game being to displace the balls into their respective pockets ahead of your opponent.

[0004] The Keegan patent (U.S. Pat. No. 4,018,446) discloses a board game that includes a plurality of linear and side-by-side parallel tracks with each track having a plurality of playing members slidably disposed therein with the object of the game being to move the playing members within each track in a linear manner from one end of the track across a dividing line to the other end of the track.

[0005] The Rudell et al. patent (U.S. Pat. No. 4,333,655) discloses a mountain climber game wherein an upright playing surface includes trails to be traversed by playing pieces that must negotiate and avoid hazards such as missiles or other hazards.

[0006] The Engel et al. patent (U.S. Pat. No. 4,343,476) discloses a playing piece for a board game that includes a base, a stem, and a sliding jacket.

[0007] The Engel patent (U.S. Pat. No. 4,415,158) discloses a puzzle that includes both two-dimensional and three-dimensional configurations with both configurations having movable segments supported on a base.

[0008] The Martin patent (U.S. Pat. No. 4,793,615) discloses a puzzle having movable pieces with the puzzle pieces movable in a single plane among intersecting grooves to form and create the pre-arranged relationship.

[0009] The D’Agostino patent (U.S. Pat. No. 5,165,692) discloses a game board with movable pieces wherein the game board includes a plurality of spaced-apart tracks with each track containing a plurality of discs and the object of the game being to move the discs in a linear manner across a centerline ahead of the other players.

[0010] The Jones patent (U.S. Pat. No. 5,419,558) discloses a puzzle box having a top, a bottom, and sides with some of the sides including slideable panels so that moving the panels in a certain manner unlocks the lid for allowing access to any puzzle piece or prize contained within the box.

[0011] The Spitzer patent (U.S. Pat. No. 5,947,473) discloses a toy slide puzzle that includes a base portion having upper and lower surfaces with a pictorial representation on the upper surface and a track is located on the upper surface for the movement thereof of manipulative elements.

[0012] Nonetheless, despite the ingenuity of the above board games, there remains a need for a board game that allows for the lateral movement of playing pieces to form a picture, pattern, word, or phrase with the playing pieces completely removable from the game case after the completion of the game and capable of reinsertion back into the tracks for play of the next game.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0013] The present invention comprehends a puzzle-type board game wherein the correct arrangement of slidable and laterally movable game playing pieces forms pictures, patterns, or configurations of natural scenes, such as animals, geometric shapes, or popular words and phrases. The puzzle-type board game of the present invention can also be adapted for a computer video game or a handheld computer video game. However, the manual, non-electric version of the puzzle board game has the widest applicability.

[0014] The puzzle board game of the present invention includes a case having at least three sidewalls and which is open at one end. Pivoting attached to the case is a cover, and the cover includes an interior cardholder for holding additional game cards that have additional patterns and pictures imprinted thereon. Contained within the sidewalls of the case are intersecting tracks that extend left/right and/or up and down to the sidewalls. The game playing pieces are slidably and laterally movable within the tracks, and on the playing surfaces of some of the playing pieces are portions of the particular pattern or picture that form the complete picture or pattern when the game playing pieces are properly arranged within the case. An end member is attachable removable to one side of the case (the side that lacks a sidewall), and the end member is removable so that the playing pieces can be slid out of the tracks after the completion of the puzzle whereupon the playing pieces are randomly inserted back onto the tracks and then the end member is reattached to the case so that the puzzle can be solved anew from the randomly inserted playing pieces. It should be noted that the playing pieces could include round or square-shaped facing surfaces. Also, when all the playing pieces are disposed onto the tracks they form a contiguous interfitting grid pattern or arrangement.

[0015] The degree of difficulty—or conversely, the level or expertise—for solving each puzzle board game is determined by the number of empty spaces in the grid arrangement. Thus,
three empty spaces—spaces without a game playing piece—designate a puzzle for children or novices, two empty spaces designate a puzzle of intermediate difficulty, and only one empty space designates a puzzle for an expert or grand master. In order to further enhance the competitiveness and of the puzzle board game, a timer can be included to time the solution of the puzzle with the time determined by such categories as age and level of skill.

It is an objective of the present invention to provide a puzzle board game that can be played by both children and adults and by those that are both experts and novices in puzzle solving.

It is another objective of the present invention to provide a puzzle board game that is ideal for children in that the board game enhances their problem solving and concentration abilities.

It is yet another objective of the present invention to provide a puzzle board game that provides for various levels of puzzle solving difficulty.

It is still yet another objective of the present invention to provide a puzzle board game that can be adapted for play on a handheld computer device or as a computer video game.

These and other objects, features, and advantages will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon a perusal of the following detailed description read in conjunction with the accompanying drawing figures and appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the cover opened to reveal the playing pieces arranged within the case;

FIG. 2 is a top plan view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the detachable securment of the end member to the case;

FIG. 3 is a sectioned side elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention taken along lines 3-3 of FIG. 1 showing the arrangement of the playing pieces within the tracks formed in the case;

FIG. 4 is a sectioned front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention taken along lines 4-4 of FIG. 1 showing the arrangement of the playing pieces within the tracks formed in the case;

FIG. 5 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention showing one square-shaped game playing piece and the marking on the front of the playing piece that facilitates its placement within the particular track of the case;

FIG. 6 is a rear elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention showing the rear of the square-shaped game-playing piece first shown in FIG. 5;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the square-shaped game-playing piece first shown in FIG. 5;

FIG. 8 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the marking on the front of the foot of one circular-shaped game-playing piece;

FIG. 9 is a rear elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the rear of the circular-shaped playing piece first shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 10 is a perspective view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the circular-shaped game-playing piece first shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the cover in the open position and the end member detached from one side of the case to partially reveal a section of the track;

FIG. 12 is a perspective view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the cover in the open position and the end member attached and three of the game playing pieces removed to reveal a portion of the intersecting track;

FIG. 13 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating one completed representative puzzle picture or configuration in the form of geometric figures;

FIG. 14 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating another representative completed puzzle picture or configuration in the form of a popular phrase;

FIG. 15 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating a third representative completed puzzle picture or configuration in the form of a popular phrase;

FIG. 16 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the representative puzzle picture first shown in FIG. 13 but having two open spaces;

FIG. 17 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the representative puzzle picture first shown in FIG. 14 having three open spaces;

FIG. 18 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment for the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the board game being played on a computer screen via a keyboard and mouse;

FIG. 19 is a perspective view of a second preferred embodiment for the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating the board game being played on a hand-held computer device;

FIG. 20 is a front elevational view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating a timer that can be used with the board game for timing the play of the board game;

FIG. 21 is a perspective view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating a plurality of additional game cards each; and

FIG. 22 is a perspective view of the board game with laterally movable pieces for the present invention illustrating a plurality of additional game playing pieces.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Illustrated in FIGS. 1-22 is a puzzle-type board game 10 for play by both children and adults and which tests various mental/intellectual abilities and skills that include pattern recognition, problem solving, and word comprehension. The puzzle-type board game 10 is lightweight, portable, and can be easily set up for play at home, at the park, play-
ground, or beach, and at vacation sites such as at a hotel, motel, or campground. The puzzle game board 10 of the present invention can also be adapted for computerized play as will be hereinafter further described.

[0044] Thus, as shown in FIGS. 1, 2, 4, 11 and 12, the puzzle game board 10 includes a generally rectangular-shaped case 12 having a bottom surface 14 and three sidewalls 16, two or which are long-sided and one of which defines a short side. The sidewalls 16 define an interior game board region 18 and the opposite short side is open to accommodate an end member 20 that is removably attachable to the case 12. FIGS. 2 and 11 illustrate the attachment and detachment of the end member 20 to the short side of the case 12. The end member 20 includes a pair of mambins 22 that are removably insertable into corresponding and aligned slots 24 that are formed into the flat ends 26 of the long sided sidewalls 16.

[0045] Illustrated in FIGS. 1, 2, 11 and 12 is a cover 28 hingably or pivotally secured to the case 12 by a conventional pivot member. The cover 28 includes an interior side, and the interior side includes an inner lip 30 for holding one or more additional or auxiliary game cards that have various patterns and pictures imprinted thereon. The game cards can be popped out of the cover 28 or slid out of the cover 28 through a slot formed on one side of the cover 28.

[0046] As shown in FIGS. 2, 3, 4, 11, and 12, the puzzle board game 10 includes a plurality of intersecting tracks 32 formed within the case 12 and delimited by the sidewalls 16. The intersecting tracks 32 are formed by a plurality of track guides or members 34, and the tracks 32 extend in a linear fashion at right angles right and left and up and down—to or away from the individual sitting and facing the case 12 with the cover 28 open. As shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, the tracks 32 extend into the body 36 of case 12 at least approximately halfway down into the case 12, and the tracks 32 form a grid or grid-like pattern or arrangement that extends across and fills game board region 18 of the case 12.

[0047] As shown in FIGS. 5-10, a plurality of game playing pieces 38, all commensurate in size and shape, are disposed within the tracks 32 for slideable lateral and reciprocable movement therein and therealong. Each game-playing piece 38 includes a foot 40, a stem 42, and a body member 44. Body members 44 can be square-shaped, as shown in FIGS. 5-7, or body members 46 can be circular-shaped as shown in FIGS. 8-10. Each body member 44 includes a game facing surface 48, and some—but not all—of the facing surfaces 48 of the playing pieces 38 include portions of a particular puzzle picture, pattern or configuration imprinted thereon. In effect, the combination of the game playing pieces 38 and the tracks 32 form a puzzle grid 49 that fills the case 12 and is bounded and confined by the end member 20 and the sidewalls 16. Representative puzzle pictures or configurations can include geometric shapes, common or popular words and phrases, and pictures or scenes of natural flora and fauna. Thus, FIG. 13 illustrates a representative puzzle picture that includes geometric shapes 50 (a square, a circle, and a triangle). FIG. 14 includes a representative puzzle picture that is in the form of natural fauna 52, i.e., a killer whale, and FIG. 15 includes a representative puzzle shape that includes a common phrase 54 “Apples Are Red”. Furthermore, to assist in resetting the game playing pieces 38 onto the tracks 32 the front surface of each foot 40 includes indicia or markings 56 that indicate the direction (facing toward the player or facing away from the player) that each game playing piece 38 should be placed when sliding the playing pieces 38 back onto the tracks 32 and into position for play of the next puzzle game. Resetting of the game playing pieces 38 is easily accomplished by simply removing the end member 20 from its attachment to the sidewalls 16 of the case 12, tilting the case 12 toward the table or ground so that the game playing pieces 38 are able to slide off the tracks 32 and onto the table, replacing and resetting the game playing pieces 38 back onto the tracks 32 in some random manner, and then snapping the end member 20 back onto the case 12 for containing the playing pieces 38 within the game board region 18 of the case 12 so that the puzzle board game 10 is ready for its next use.

[0048] Moreover, the level of difficulty or expertise required for puzzle solving and solution is related to the number of empty space or spaces on the grid that forms the puzzle picture 50, 52, or 54 shown in FIGS. 13-15. One space unfilled by a game-playing piece 38, and an “X” marks this space 58. A puzzle grid 49 with one empty space 58 in its picture 50, 52, or 54, as those illustrated in FIGS. 13-15, is for an individual having the puzzle solving skills of an expert or grand master. FIG. 16 illustrates the same puzzle picture 50 shown in FIG. 13, but with two empty spaces 58—or spaces unlined by game playing pieces 38. Representative puzzle pictures 50, 52, or 54 having two empty spaces 58 are designed for an individual having normal or intermediate range puzzle solving skills and abilities. FIG. 17 illustrates the same puzzle picture 52 shown in FIG. 14, but with three empty spaces 58 in the puzzle grid 49—or three spaces 58 not filled by game playing pieces 38. A puzzle grid 49 having three empty spaces 58 is designed for children or Novices. The game playing pieces 38 are moved laterally (left and right, up and down, horizontally and vertically relative to the position of the player) about the tracks 32 utilizing the empty spaces 58 as a starting point until the picture, such as pictures 50, 52, and 54, are completed. It should also be noted that after each play of the game 10, the game playing pieces 38 would be reset onto the tracks 32 with the empty space 58 or spaces 58 placed in a different location within the grid 49 for each new game.

[0049] As was previously noted, the puzzle board game 10 can include one or more game cards 60 as well as additional sets of game playing pieces 38 with the respective picture or pattern imprinted on the facing surfaces 48 the playing pieces 38 for each additional set corresponding to the picture or pattern shown on the illustrative game card 60. Each game card 60 needs to have a unique puzzle picture, as illustrated in FIGS. 50, 52, and 54, imprinted thereon as a guide to puzzle solution and so that there is no dispute as to what the completed puzzle should look like. The additional game cards 60 can be stored in the holder 30 and the additional sets of playing pieces 38 can be packaged in separate bags or wraps. The additional game cards 60 and additional game playing pieces 38 are shown in FIGS. 21 and 22. To further enhance the play of the puzzle board game 10, and increase its competitiveness, a timer 62, shown in FIG. 20, can be added for timing the solution time for any given player of any respective puzzle picture for the board game 10. The various solution times can be recorded and the individual that solves the particular puzzle picture, for example, representative pictures 50, 52, or 54, in the shortest amount of time can be named the winner. Using the timer 62 introduces a competitive feature to the puzzle board game 10 so that the board game 10 doesn’t always have to be a solitary pursuit.
In addition to the manually portable puzzle board game of the preferred embodiment as shown in FIG. 1-17, the board game can include computerized adaptations as shown in FIGS. 18 and 19. Thus, FIG. 18 illustrates a computer version of the board game 64 that includes computer monitor 66, a keyboard 68 and a (wireless) mouse 70. Illustrated on the screen 72 of the computer monitor 66 is a puzzle picture 74 corresponding to the puzzle picture 50 shown in FIG. 13. FIG. 19 illustrates the puzzle board game adapted for use with a handheld computer 76 that includes a flip-top keyboard 78 and an interconnected screen 80 (preferably and LCD screen). Additional puzzle pictures can be stored on a disc for use with the computer version 64 shown in FIG. 18 or on a flash drive for use with the handheld computer version 76 shown in FIG. 19.

Thus, while a preferred embodiment, and several alternative embodiments of the invention have been shown and described in detail, numerous modifications, alterations, variations, and changes may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined and set forth in the appended claims.

1. A puzzle board game for solving a puzzle picture, comprising:
   - a case having three sidewalls with the sidewalls defining an interior game board region;
   - an end member attachably removable to at least two of the sidewalls for closing the interior game board region;
   - a plurality of intersecting tracks extending between the sidewalls and the end member and completely filling the interior game board region with the intersecting tracks defining a puzzle grid;
   - a plurality of game playing pieces disposed on the tracks and each game-playing piece selectively laterally slidably movable independently of the other game playing pieces;
   - at least some of the game-playing piece having portions of the respective puzzle picture imprinted thereon;
   - a cover pivotally attached to the case and which is openable and closable upon the game playing pieces;
   - the puzzle grid having at least one empty space to permit the lateral sliding movement of the game playing pieces about the tracks; and
   - whereupon the game playing pieces are moved about the tracks until the puzzle picture is completed and then the end member is removed so that the game playing pieces can be removed from the interior game board region and then the game playing pieces are reset in a random manner back onto the tracks and the end member is attached to the sidewalls so that play of the next puzzle game can commence.

2. The puzzle board game of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of game cards with each game card having a unique puzzle picture imprinted thereon.

3. The puzzle board game of claim 2 wherein the cover includes an inner lip for holding game cards therein.

4. The puzzle board game of claim 3 wherein each game-playing piece includes a foot, a stem, and body member.

5. The puzzle board game of claim 4 wherein the puzzle picture can be representative of a word, a phrase, a geometric shape, and flora and fauna from the natural world.

6. The puzzle board game of claim 5 wherein the puzzle grid having three empty spaces is for a novice or child.

7. The puzzle board game of claim 6 wherein the puzzle grid having two empty spaces is intended for an individual having normal and intermediate puzzle solving abilities.

8. The puzzle board game of claim 7 wherein the puzzle grid having one empty space is for an individual having expert puzzle solving abilities.

9. A puzzle board game for solving a puzzle picture, comprising:
   - a case having three sidewalls with the sidewalls defining an interior game board region;
   - an end member attachably removable to at least two of the sidewalls for closing off the interior game board region;
   - a plurality of intersecting tracks extending between the sidewalls and the end member and completely filling the interior game board region with the intersecting tracks defining a puzzle grid within the case;
   - a plurality of game playing pieces disposed on the tracks and each game playing piece selectively laterally slidably movable thereon independent of the other game playing pieces;
   - at least some of the game playing pieces having portions of the respective puzzle picture imprinted thereon;
   - at least one game card having the puzzle picture imprinted thereon that corresponds to the puzzle picture imprinted on the game playing pieces;
   - a cover pivotally attached to the case and which is openable and closable upon the game playing pieces;
   - the cover including an inner lip for holding additional game cards;
   - the puzzle grid having between one and three empty spaces to permit the lateral slidable movement of the game playing pieces on the tracks and for a plurality of levels of difficulty for puzzle picture solution; and
   - whereupon the game playing pieces are moved about the tracks until the puzzle picture is completed and then the end member is removed so that the game playing pieces can be removed from the interior game board region and then the game playing pieces are reset back onto the tracks in a random manner with the end member attached to the sidewalls so that the puzzle board game can be played anew.

10. The puzzle board game of claim 9 wherein each game playing piece includes a foot, a stem, a body member, and a game facing surface.

11. The puzzle board game of claim 10 wherein the puzzle picture can be representative of a word, a phrase, a geometric shape, and flora and fauna from the natural world.

12. The puzzle board game of claim 11 having three empty spaces in the puzzle grid being intended for play by a novice and child.

13. The puzzle board game of claim 12 having two empty spaces in the puzzle grid being intended for play by an individual having normal and intermediate puzzle solving abilities.

14. The puzzle board game of claim 13 having only one empty space in the puzzle grid being intended for play by an individual having expert puzzle solving abilities.

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