ASHAWARE reviewed - pronounced (ash shaw rie)

ASHAWARE makes AfroCentric software. The firm has ten titles spanning across grade school subjects about careers, geography, history, language arts, math, music, science and social studies. Delivered in a compiled, interpreted language, ASHAWARE positions their software for everyone who wants to learn about the world through chosen subjects. Its chosen motto is MOTIVATE, EDUCATE, STIMULATE. *"The software is not just for people of African descent, it is for everybody,"* said the owner in the product overview demo reel.

ASHAWARE is a Toronto, Ontario Canadian company that's been around for a number of years. I received correspondence from the firm in the late 1980's early 1990s. Its software is being used by school boards and school districts across the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. We loved the way ASHAWARE presented its current software line using user-generated video.

What you get is a detailed overview. All you have to do is watch the MPEG 4 movie roll forward and turn up your sound. Consider it a "trailer" describing the software products that you can stop, pause, restart, fast-forward or rewind as much as you like if you miss something. What you seen in the movie frame is a mouse moving around the actual screen layers and menus of each program (there are 10) as a voice describes what you are seeing. Presumably, the chief software programmer is the passionate voice behind the scenes and he does a great job describing them. The listener will know exactly what to expect from using the software after watching his demo.

Prices for ASHAWARE are listed as *software suite licenses* similar to the way Microsoft packages its high profit margin, multi-program office suite. ASHAWARE sells user oriented educational software. Its not for the enterprise, its not for business but a single user license cost more than the Home/Student version of Microsoft Office. At $199.00 per home product, the ASHAWARE item is for the households with lots of disposable income. The firmi is competing against better known brands that cost way less money, but ASHAWARE does have an edtge - that is - its AfroCentric in style and substannce, more so that other packages on the market. ASHAWARE prices scale upwards from the two hundred bottom to $4,999 for a massive school license which we assume allows for unlimited users because schools love to copy things and forget copy-protecting CD-ROM discs these days because that technology has been hacked! Other ASHAWARE prices and configuration range from $249 for a single user license, $1099 for 5 users, $2199 for 10 users, and $3499 for 20 users. These are lab-like network price structures.

Students will see lots of multiple choice questions in this product and they get to read a lot, shich is good. They are NOT going to like the music sound track choices. Rap,Hip-Hop and Pop

instrumental music would have made better choices. The program design is linear. Once a person goes through everything and gets the answers, they may push the software aside to look for something else. Stickness is a big thing with web sites. Its the factor that encourages people to come again and again, like they do on Facebook. Stickiness draws people to the screen and this is a social weapon used with some web sites that is very very hard to duplicate with software, unless, that is - using it is like Microsoft Outlook or Google's Gmail is to a school -- there are bonifide reasons certain software must be used every single day, but this product is not one of those. A strict parent or teacher can force it on a kid, but that sorta defeats the purpose, doesn't it.?

Good software makes you want to try it and this software does have something going for it in this regard. The content is clearly presented, its educational value objectives are notable. Someone clearly was thinking about the educational process when they put together this series. The product brochure has a language that speaks more to an educator that it will a parent

Jump into the program and you'll start learning about a particular subject at point A. Later, you'll arrive at point Z. This is when the user will have a massive exposure to the subject part and can be tested to see if *"they got it.."* Its a useful control mechanism. Eventurally, there will be no more to learn from the software content because it is finite.

So, this is not a bad idea if the ultimate objective is the get a person to read and remember more in a way that helps them learn. Imagine you have a class of 10 kids and paid $2199 for the licenses. You tell them to open up the history module. You give them the assignment that they will be tested after they go through these exercises and you let them at it.   At some point, based on what time you have with the kids on a daily basis - they will have covered everything.

Although, there are literally hundreds of thousands of important historical figures with complex lives and histories, you're not going to get to cover hundreds of thousands of human beings - no, you get just the ones ASHAWARE loaded into the software.   So, this is not so bad if the purpose intended for using these software products with your students are well planned in advance; that you have considered the recommendations of the company and take them under advisement, but don't think this product is going to replace a good classroom teacher with an infinite brain.

So, one has to consider the question - must education software offer unlimited content? Well, it depends, doesn't it. The answer is no if used for memorization and reinforcement drills. The answer is yes if its to mimic the value of books unless you really find that using a software package is cheaper than buying and managing book inventory. I mean, let's face it! There are a gazillion free books out there in every single community in the US. Everybody donates free

books. With the growing immigrant population, that also means you'll have access to free books from "their" countries through their spirit of giving. But using books requires more expensive teaches or great community volunteers who you cannot control as easily. So, this software has a purpose and its better than some books because the authors have taken the time to make it so. .. judging from the previews in the video clip overview. This software is fine but I just think its too pricey!

Another **blackSoftware.com** software review. Oct 12, 2012

This reviewer was trained to teach voc ed subjects like Electronics, Non-Linear Video Editing and Computer Science, I admit. I am not a Language Arts kind of guy so, if I'm missing something here in reviewing the software or if you think I'm coming off a bit biased, then, you're right. I am, but let's move on.

 Recommendation: The maker can upgrade to open-source code and use the Wikipedia online dictionary for its product program content. I'd recommend using HTML 5. If that was done, users of this software series would have a better value for the money and better yet - the educational value to the licensee would become endless!

ASHWARE products described in this review are compatible with late model Windows XP and the Apple OS. Check the brochure for minimum cpu and ram requirements.   This software review was written by blackSoftware.com. Have a happy electronic day!

William Murrell is the Boston-based wizop of of BlackSoftware.com and he wrote this review. He proposing added the terms "ethnic software" and "blacksoftware" to the Wikipedia online dictionary's staff of senior editors, because it would accurately fill out the existing definition of "applications software" while reflecting on the broader racial mix in the United States. For three years, William served as a volunteer panel judge with the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation's Profiles in Courage high school student essay contest - www.jfkcontest.org

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