



Storytelling | Photo source Pixabay

STARTUP USES VOICE RECOGNITION TO ENHANCE BEDTIME STORIES



RETAIL

A new app developed for popular children's books allows users to add sound effects to reading out loud.

In the digital age, it is not enough for many people to simply read books – they want the opportunity to bring those books alive. We have already seen this with synchronised [tailor-made music for ebooks](#) and an ebook that turns [books into games](#). Now, the Seattle startup [Novel Effect](#) has developed a way to add sound effects to books that are read out loud bringing children's story time to life. Using voice recognition, Novel Effect synchronises theme music, sound effects, and even animated illustration to your voice as you read out loud from a print or ebook. With Novel Effect, you become the narrator for an immersive reading experience.

The idea for Novel Effect came about when founders Matt Hammersley, a former patent attorney and engineer, and his wife Melissa, a graphic designer, listened to friends reading out loud at a baby shower. One friend added fun voices and sound effects to her reading and the Hammersley's realized that if everyone could do this as they read, it could help encourage a greater love of reading in children. The idea is to complement books and storytelling, rather than replace them, allowing parents to create a unique sharing experience with their children.

The platform recently announced a pilot program with [Hachette Book Group](#) to create interactive soundtracks for select children's books from the [Little, Brown Books for Young Readers](#). Users select a book from the Novel Effect app and then begin reading out loud. The app syncs the effects to the readers voice – adapting to the user's unique reading speed and speaking style. If the user stops to talk about a part of the story or the illustrations, the system will loop subtle background music to keep the experience going. While the range of titles available is still small, the company

hopes to expand to eventually include thousands of titles. What other aspects of life might be enhanced with their own soundtrack?

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