

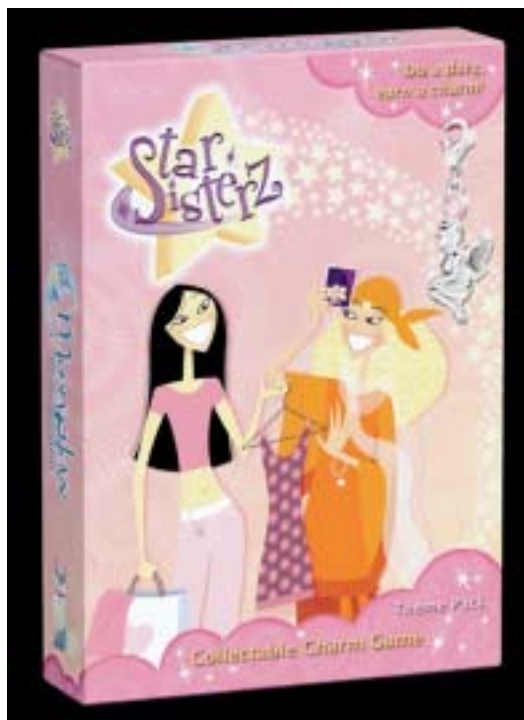
Cards to novels

Star Sisterz hitting the book shelves

By Jason White

With the launch of the new book imprint Mirrorstone last year, Wizards of the Coast, Renton, Wash., entered the tween and young reader category. Now they are expanding upon the Star Sisterz collectible charm game (see Playthings November 2004) with a book imprint under Mirrorstone.

The Mirrorstone imprint has been dedicated to providing young readers ages 8 to 12 with original fiction. The stories from the first two series, *Dragonlance: The New Adventures* and *Knights of the Silver Dragon*, feature young companions who band together for friendship and excitement. These series were mostly male focused, so Wizards realized it needed to broaden the reading spectrum.



■ **Star Sisterz collectible charm game, starter deck, Wizards of the Coast, Renton, Wash.**

Growing existing brand
The collectible charm game, Star Sisterz, had been planned by Wizards of the Coast for some time. Last year it took a closer look at the property and realized the potential that was there for storytelling.

"We worked closely with the team managing the collectible charm game to come up with story lines that we feel properly reflect the intellectual property," Peter Archer, associate publisher of novels, Wizards of the Coast tells PLAYTHINGS.



This series is focused on and written specifically for girls 8 to 12.

Close, but not too close
"The books are designed to stand alone and it isn't necessary to have the game in order to understand the stories. They're about girls having fun and learning valuable life lessons, giving them a greater sense of identity and empowerment," Archer comments.

Nova Rocks! and *Carmen Dives In* are the first two releases and both are due out in April 2005. The novels will be sold through the book channel, including chains and independent stores. The Star Sisterz novels are \$5.99; the game Star Sisterz Mini Packs are \$2.49; the Star Sisterz Theme Decks are \$6.49.

"We're looking into the possibility of getting them into specialty stores as

Passing tips to the consumer

A savvy retailer can use the following tips from Wizards of the Coast to help customers get their children to read and maybe use some the ideas for the store.

1. Create a quiet, comfortable reading area.
2. Suggest books with themes that reflect the child's interests.
3. Read aloud to your child.
4. Drop by a library or bookstore once a month.
5. Recommend a mix of classics and new books.
6. Introduce books that made a strong impression on you.

■ **First two novels in the Star Sisterz series from Renton, Wash.-based Wizards of the Coast's Mirrorstone imprint.**

well," Archer adds.

There are plans to release eight books annually. There will only be four titles released this year. *Bright Lights for Bella* will be released in August, and *Rani and the Fashion Divas* in November.

However Wizards just isn't offering books, it also offers education.

Getting kids to read
Sometimes getting a child to pick up a book with all the distractions around them can be impossible. Wizards, to go along with its Mirrorstone line, is launching a program to help librarians and teachers incorporate Mirrorstone novels into their classroom and activities.

It will distribute Reluctant Reader Kits to librarians across the country that will include tips on encouraging kids to read, activity ideas, and other fun and useful materials (for some of the tips see the side bar).

Wizards anticipate that the Reluctant Reader Kit will be distributed to at least 1,000 librarians nationwide. This should shape up to be a big program for Mirrorstone in 2005, but currently it is only in the middle stages of development and planning for the project.

While there aren't any other POPs or incentives currently for this book line, Wizards of the Coast has a fairly good track record when it comes to games and publishing.

DVDs

Boys and dogs and frogs, oh my!

The Scholastic Video Collection, New York, is releasing four new collections of kids stories on DVD. The releases are being distributed by New Video and feature stories from Hans Christian Andersen, Leo Lionno, William Steig, Jules Feiffer and feature celebrity narrators such as John Lithgow and Lynn Whitfield.

Bark, George ... and More Dog Tails features three stories; *Bark George* by Jules Feiffer, *Dot the Fire Dog* by Lisa Desimini, and *No Roses for Harry* by Gene Zion. *Bark George* is narrated by John Lithgow and all the stories are taken directly from their children's book counterpart.

Since this is a direct adaptation of the book, the opportunity for a solid cross-sell is present. Retailers can build a book to DVD section in the store giving kids and parents the best of both worlds.



■ **Bark, George DVD from Scholastic, New York.**

Feeding multi-media-hungry kids and giving parents the ability to read what their children are watching can translate into sales of both the books and DVDs.

There is plenty of bonus programming on the DVD. Some of the extras include three more stories, *A Boy, a Dog*, and a *Frog* by Mercer Mayer, *Whistle for Willie* by Ezra Jack Keats and *Angus Lost* by Majorie Flack. Parents and kids will like the read along feature which runs closed caption text along the bottom of the screen so kids can follow along.

This DVD is designed for kids ages 3 to 9. The SRP for VHS/DVD is \$9.95/\$14.95. There are now 28 titles in the Scholastic Video Collection.