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Back in Time for iPad Makes Scientific History Fresh and Accessible — iPad App Review

By Emily | January 27, 2012 | No comment yet   Share |

Ever since Carl Sagan brought *Cosmos* to viewers on PBS, scientific educators (as well as their publishers and TV producers) have searched for ways to make mind-boggling concepts like cosmic time and the Big Bang easier for people of all ages to understand. Landka's Back in Time for iPad, which is part edu-app and part digital coffee table book, tweaks Sagan's metaphoric Cosmic Calendar by collapsing the history of the universe's 13.7 billion years into a single day.

Back in Time breaks down the 24 hour period into epoch's of cosmic or geologic time, so the reader can move through the Earth's history from the Big Bang to the present, stopping at each event to view photos, watch videos, and read text geared for a curious, but not necessarily scientifically-trained, audience. Back in Time entertains as it educates, bringing the message of educational television programs such as Cosmos and Nova Science Now to a new medium.

While readers may be tempted to dive in and start exploring the app, it's well-worth the time to read the book's introduction, which is accessible from the splash screen. The introduction reminds the reader that according to the app's imaginary clock, human evolution began only sixteen seconds ago, and Homo Sapiens have existed for just over one second.

Back in Time's purpose isn't (just) to make humankind's place in cosmic history feel small and insignificant, rather it's to use the clock, which is a device so utterly familiar, to contextualize events for its readers.

Navigating through Back in Time's stunning UI is straight forward. To enter the timeline the reader simply adjusts the hands of the on-screen clock to a particular time, then taps the clock to reveal an interactive cosmic timeline. Readers can use a swipe gesture to pan along the timeline that runs along the bottom of the page or tap one of the images that arcs through the sky to go to a particular event such as the Origin of Birds or the acquisition of fire by Homo Erectus.

Each event on the timeline has its own section, complete with a brief article, as well as images and videos that the user can access through gesture controls. As the event screen is opened, a short animation rolls. Readers can also access interesting facts related to each section by tapping the lightbulb in the lower-left corner. For example, the section on the K-T Extinction (which finished off the dinosaurs) begins with the question, "Did you know that the reign of the dinosaurs began and ended with mass extinctions."

Much as a reader would flip through a coffee table book, one can enjoy Back in Time by following the progression from the Big Bang at 0:00 to the present, or moving back and forth through the events in any order.

Download Back in Time for iPad from the App Store for $7.99. Back in Time for iPhone is also available as a separate purchase.

What I liked: Landka's team spent more than a year creating Back in Time and their efforts were well spent. The beautiful UI creates the perfect back drop for the detailed time line, while the writing stays away from jargon or overly technical terms that might deter some readers.

What I didn't like: Though the app's soundtrack is pleasant, it was a distraction from reading. I would have preferred to mute the sound from within the app.

To buy or not to buy: Any reader who enjoys learning about science will find Back in Time a solid addition to his iPad library. While some of the information might be too challenging for kids younger than 10, the app may provide a chance for parents to explore the book with children who aren't ready to read it on their own yet.

- **App Name:** [Back in Time for iPad](#)
- **Version Reviewed:** 1.0
- **Category:** Books
- **Developer:** Landka
- **Price:** $7.99
- **Score:** ⭐⭐⭐⭐½

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About Emily: Emily is a freelance writer who loves discovering new apps whenever she can pry the iPad away from her children or husband. You can contact her via Twitter: [@whatwentwrite](#)

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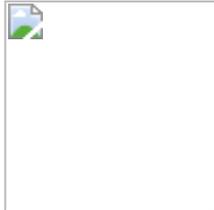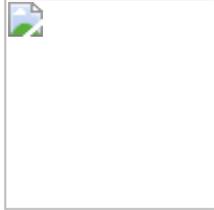 ReaddleDocs for...   Nightstand Cent...

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