

Chapter 1 – Yearning for Childhood



Candy Land - 40

I couldn't ask for a better game to drop in the 40 slot. Candy Land feasts on lists of this kind, gobbling up sugary, nostalgia-drenched, positive votes served by a questionable ranking system that devalues downvote haters. King Candy and Court's success, however, is still gunked up by the ire in the icing. With approximately 57% of the audience voting against it, this tart is a hard candy sell. The fact that this syrupy game layers the bottom of our list with a peanut brittle base is a testament to how many sweet tooth suckers love Candy Land despite its jawbreaking flaws.

The quest to rule said confection kingdom is guided by the sticky hand of fate. In the classic version of the game, players are penalized for mucking about in the Molasses Swamp, skipping their turn, over and over, until they draw a certain color. They rocket forward the map with preposterous lucky

draws, and victory is stolen from players primping to join the court at Candy Castle only to find a missive shoved in their hands with the dire news that they must return to Plumply the Troll's Gingerbread Plum Tree near the beginning of the game, who evidently only wants to say 'Hi.' Clearly he never needed your help, because his full basket is proof that he already finished picking his damn plums and has zero respect for your goals or your time.



*Son of a B-! If you do this to me one more time, I will cut you Plumpy,
and burn your tree to the ground!*

Your average two-player game lasts around 50 turns. If you enact the house rule where winning requires you to land on King Candy's space exactly (a rule insisted upon by everyone who is not winning), then 10% of those games will last 126 turns or more.¹ One hundred and twenty-six turns filled with repetitive motion disorder invoking game play, occasionally broken by unwarranted leaps ahead and soul crushing setbacks. If I wanted an emotional roller coaster, I'd instead quit my job and enter a career I knew nothing about, only accepting interviews from women that remind me of cartoon heroines I idolized as a child. You don't know nervous until you've been asked a question about how your qualifications apply to 'this specific scenario' in a double-interview with Ms. O'Neil and Ms. SanDiego, only to realize you blanked out of the conversation two minutes ago.

1 <http://www.lscheffer.com/CandyLand.htm>

If we can stomach Candy Land's egregious flaws, however, there remains the spirit of an earnest tutor. For many children, this is the first board game they will grasp, and can play with others. The fact that Candy Land requires no skill isn't a liability. It makes the game ideal for children ages three to six. In the meantime, these tykes are learning skills us adults take for granted. The rules of the game, so basic as to bore us to tears, are complicated enough to keep them engaged. Children playing Candy Land learn how to follow directions, how to abide by rules, how to interact with others when given a goal, how great it feels to win, and most importantly, how to lose gracefully. Even picking up the pieces and putting the box away is a learning experience. Cleaning after oneself is never important until it leads to the destruction of something you love.

I'm not saying you need to love Candy Land. It's an abysmal game. But I'm willing to give it the respect it deserves. King Candy's rule enraptured kids since 1949. And as long as there are board games, some variation of Candy Land is likely to keep the rug rats mellow while Mom/Dad/Rosie the Robot hydrates the soylent vita-meals.

