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Week 2 —Analog Game Analysis: MAD Magazine Card Game

A twist on the card game Uno and Crazy Eights, the MAD Magazine Card Game is a silly card game based on the popular MAD Magazine. The goal, as in Uno and Crazy Eights, is to be the first player to get rid of all of his cards. Published by Parker Brothers in 1979, the game consists of 76 cards, one card tray, and a rule pamphlet. After playing the MAD Magazine Card Game with friends for a few rounds one thing really stood out, the art style. While not meant to be taken seriously, the art style of the cards was not only enjoyable, but also functioned as a visually informative way of understanding the purpose of the card and reflected the goals of playing the game.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the MAD Magazine Card Game is the artwork featured on the cards. The deck of 76 cards is broken up into 48 suit cards, with four suits, each a different color featuring Alfred E. Neuman, the MAD Magazine mascot. There’s a green leisure suit, a yellow space suit, a red union suit, and a blue suit of armor. Each of these suits show Alfred E. Neuman wearing clothing matching the suit type in fixed pose where the situation he is in is getting progressively worse as the card number increases from 1 to 6. For example, the card 1 green leisure suit shows Alfred E. Neuman in a seemingly relaxing situation, smiling while standing in a green leisure suit. However, card 2 of the green leisure suit shows an egg flying toward Alfred E. Neuman’s head. By card 6 of the green leisure suit, Alfred E. Neuman is covered in all sorts of garbage, yet remains in the same smiling pose. The art progression from card 1 to 6 in each suit is an entertaining way of showing the suit as a family other than simply using color to indicate a suit family. This progression also matches up with the overall goals of the game, since hanging on to high point cards is bad, just like the situations Alfred E. Neuman is in by card 6 in each suit.

The remaining 28 special cards in the deck also use the zany art style of MAD Magazine to convey the meaning of the special card in a witty way. There are 8 “Which Way?” cards, two of each color, that mock traditional playing cards using Alfred E. Neuman smiling face pointing in opposite directions. 4 “Draw 1 You Varmits” cards, one of each color, show Alfred E. Neuman in a cowboy suit, spicing up the card which has all players drawing a card from the deck. In the same spirit, there are 4 “Give Someone Two Cards from Your Hand” cards, one of each color, which shows Alfred E. Neuman snickering while offering two cards. There are even 2 “What Me Worry? You Worry!” self-defense cards showing Alfred E. Neuman as an unlikely karate black-belt. All these special cards break from the traditional look of playing cards, highlight their importance in the game, and do so in an amusing way.