

WORKER PLACEMENT GAME WITH A DIFFERENT SOUL

KEYPER

HARD WORK IN "KEYDOM"

Here we are with a new adventure by Richard Breese in the kingdom of "Keydom": but this time we have a few surprises added to classic working placement mechanics.

square cases shows a tower and it is directly connected to the river: it has a white meeple icon and a symbol: a "green leaf" for Spring, a "daisy" for Summer, a "brown leaf" for Au-

to accelerate set-up as it will take some time.

Each player gets one of the four folding boards and "composes" it at will, but the case with the tower and the "green leaf" must be openly displayed: the four boards are then placed one near the other in a line. Four boats are randomly selected and placed on one side, all of them showing the Spring symbol as well. All the "spring" tiles (the ones with a "green leaf, of course) are taken from the common reserve and placed in one bag, then 8 of them are randomly extracted and placed near the board. All the remaining tiles are also placed on the table for future use. Picture 3 shows the gaming table after the set-up

Each player takes his personal board, the 6 "building" and 6 "farm" tiles of his color, 2 wooden tokens to mark the Victory Points (VP), one "Village Fair" per type (Spring, Summer and Fall), one Keyper, 8 workers (1 grey, 1 orange, 1 brown, 1 blue, 1 green, 1 black and 2 whites "Jokers"), a "tower" tile and one finished product per type. Please look at picture 4 to see how the personal board looks after the initial set-up.

The game's sequence is simple, as each player, on his turn, has one of the following possibilities: (a) play his "Keyper" placing it on a free "tower" case (therefore selecting one of the four boards); (b) – play one of his "keyples" (workers) in one case and make the related action; (c) – lay down one or more keyples and make again the action of that case; (d) – Join another player's in a case and make the related action.



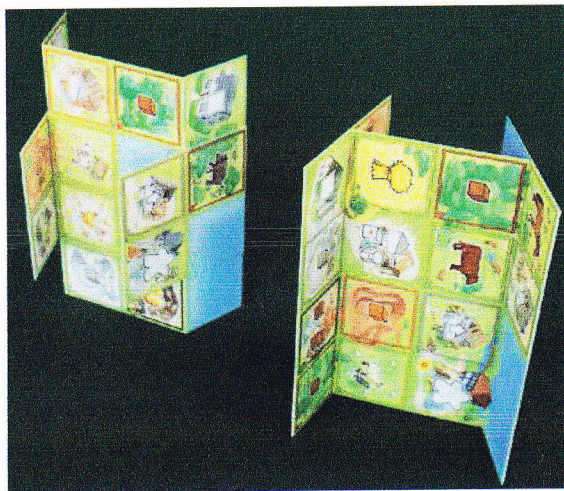
When you take the box of **KEYPER** in your hands you immediately note the weight and, opening the lid, you understand why: it is full of wooden and cardboard components. Again, Richard decided to make a game without a "real" board (like Keyflower) but you are hooked by the 4 special square boards (150x150 mm) made of superposed

turn and a "snowflake" for Winter. Yes, as it happened in other games from Richard, life in Keydom (and the game turns, of course) is regulated by the seasons. In effect all the "graphics" of this game a reminiscent of those of Keyflower and we may even say that this is a sort of "follow-up".

All other material is also well done and sturdy enough for the job: 4 "personal" boards, 26 Fair tiles, 48 Home building tiles in four colors - 6x village and 6x farm per player, 48 Country building tiles with 12 farm and 36 village tiles, 6 boats, 4 wooden Keypers (one per player, representing the master of their village), 32 Keyples (workers) in seven different colors, 96 animals (white sheep, brown cows, pink pigs, beige horses, grey goats, yellow hens, black boars and, for the first time in a game, red deer), 48 cubes resources and 48 octagonal cylinders finished

Every board has 14 square "action" cases, and each of them contains a drawing and a colored border. When a player places a worker in a case, he does the depicted action or takes one or more resources. Placing for example a worker in a green case you may get wheat or sheep or pig; placing a worker on a grey (orange/brown) case you will get stone (clay/wood); etc. Placing a meeple on the blue port means that you may select one of the available boats, doing the actions that it offers. Some cases allow you to transform a raw material (cubes) in a finished product (octagonal cylinders) or to build or improve a building, etc. You exchange or add your resources from/to your personal board.

If the worker has the same color of the selected case the action double: a green worker on a green case, for example, means that you get TWO wheats (sheep/pigs); a grey meeple on a grey case let you take TWO stones, a blue worker on a boat allows you



cardboard layers in order to let them fold in different directions. Each board has 14 square cases (for the actions) and one rectangular blue case (the river): one of the

goods (wood, clay and stone), 20 yellow wooden wheat and 64 colored translucent plastic gems. Really a lot of stuff. I strongly suggest storing each type in a different bag

to make TWICE the actions depicted, etc. But a new a very interesting rule states that when you play a worker you MUST ask the

Therefore, in the first part of each season you must purchase farms FIRST and then you take some animals. Each farm depicts certain types of animals and states how many Victory Points (VP) they will grant to the player at the end of the game. In other words, you may use each farm to host any four animals, but you get VP only if you use the ones printed on the tile (see picture 5).



other players if they want to join you on that action. The first player, in turn order, who accepts your invitation may add one keyple of the same color (or a white one) to that case: then both take the double of the resources/actions of that case. If both meeples are of the same color of the case's border you get three times its resources/actions. Going on with our example you may have: a green worker that joins another green meeple on a green case allows you to take THREE wheats (sheep, pig, etc.) You may always

To improve your buildings, you place a worker on the related case of the board, you pay one resource (1 cube for the farms and 1 octagonal cylinder for the other buildings) and you turn the tile on the other side, where actions and VP are more important. You may use "wheat" instead of the resources (wheat is a sort of joker).

When a player places a worker on a blue case of the board, he selects one of the four available boats and put it on the case: then he may do from one to three special actions, as depicted on the boat (get new resources or sell some of yours to receive VP). As usual if you use any worker you may do just one action, if you use a blue one you have two actions and if another worker joined you

play a white meeple to match a color as they are a sort of "jokers". But if the FIRST keyple is a white one the joining one must be white too.

Two of the actions are used to purchase new buildings or to improve existing ones: you may buy a building tile of your color or one of the eight always available near the board. Once purchased they should be immediately inserted in the grid of your personal board: on the left side (green) if you purchased a "farm" or in the central grid for the others.

All the animal that you got during a season must be placed in a factory tile (to a maximum of four per tile) otherwise they are eliminated.

both gets three actions. Each boat shows TWO possible action: (a) you may transform one of the depicted resources in another or (b) you may sell a resource/animal to get VP. It is also possible to use one case that already has ONE worker adding one meeple and performing the usual number of actions (2-3) but the original worker then is laid down and cannot be used anymore (he is now too tired!!).



GAMES BUYER INFORMATION SYSTEM - GABIS

STRUCTURE

Each game review also features an evaluation which can help you to find the game that best suits your tastes. The color accompanying each game title represents the USER Group. The headline also contains icons for age and number of players. The BAR in the evaluation box displays color codes for up to 10 features of a game.

USER GROUP

We have defined 4 target groups (color accompanying the head line)

Kinder:

Games for children an educational games. Adults can play in a guiding function.

Familien:

Children and parents play together, all have the same chance to win and have fun.

Freunde:

Young people and adults play together as equals

Experten:

Games with special demands on rules and playing time. Especially for game geeks

Please note for the user groups **Children, Family and Friends**: Children who love to play can be ahead of their peers! Please note that our target group "families" does not imply the classical concept of "family games"! Furthermore, our user groups can overlap. The choice of suitable games always depends on your playing partners and your fun with games!

Games that are especially eligible for **Solo** play or for **2 players** or **Large groups** of players are marked with an icon.

FEATURES

Each game targets preferences for different features in a player, therefore each game is not suitable for each player. We have listed 10 features players note when deciding on a game. Only if a player finds his preferred features in a game he will enjoy the game. The color code marks the dominant features. Educational games train the highlighted preference.

Empty boxes: This feature is neglectable or not present

One colored box: This feature is present, but not essential

Two colored boxes: This feature is present and important in the game

Three colored boxes: This feature is dominant and essential

Chance:

The game is influenced by dice, cards or any other form of random generator

Tactics:

Take decision, short-term planning, planning based on one move

Strategy:

Think ahead, long-term planning, planning for several moves

Creativity:

The player has to provide words, phrases, images and other creative efforts

Knowledge:

Cultural and educational knowledge, long-term memory

Memory:

Remember, learn by heart, short-time memory

Communication:

Talk to each other, negotiate, inform

Interaction:

Influencing each other, bluffing, auction

Dexterity:

Motor skills

Action:

Body movement, balance and reaction

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Version: The edition of the game on which the review is based

Rules: This lists the languages in which rules are available or are included in the game, often even more translations can be found on the web.

In-game text: A YES marks a game with language-dependent components that cannot be played without translation or knowledge of the language

When a player estimates that one of the four folding boards is of interest for him for the next turn, he may place his Keyper on the tower of that board, near the port. From now on all the workers that are in that board (or that will be added later) will be assigned to the player for the next turn. This is a very interesting rule as it adds suspense to the game: if you claim a board too early the opponents will rarely spend a new worker on it (knowing that you will get it at the end of the turn). But if you wait too long, the best boards will go to your opponents, and you risk starting the new turn with less

Pietro Cremona

A very good game based on the "classic" worker placement but mixed with some cooperation and area control. Planning is necessary, but the players should adapt their tactics to the situation that they find at the beginning of their turn.

than eight workers or missing some colors. Usually in our first tests the boards started to be claimed when they already contained 3-4 workers, especially if 1-2 of them were white. With more experience we started to get the boards with 5-6 workers because cooperating with the other players means a lot of extra resources and/or actions.

This rule also brings another interesting result: after the first turn it is very difficult that the players still have the same number of workers: some will have 9-10, some 6-7. Aha ... yes, I hear your comments!!! They are the same that we did during the very first game: but NO, the game will not be unbalanced for two reasons:

- (a) - The first reason is that nobody may use more than 8 workers: if you have some meeples in excess you must place them in your tower (the one on the side of the personal board). When you place your Keyper those extra workers will give you a free resource (depending on the color of the meeple).
- (b) - The second reason is that if you use your last worker and your opponents still have some extra meeples to play, in each of the following turns you may lay down all the workers of one of "your" cases (on the board that you selected with your Keyper) using again them to get actions or resources.

Very nice and interesting rule. With some experience on this game you will find that even with only 6 workers you may have more flexibility and extra resources: if, for example, you have in "your" board a 3 actions case (two workers of the same color of the case) you may lay down both to get 3 actions again.

At the end of the turn the players must show the "Village Fair" tile of that season: if they own what is depicted on the tile (usually possession of a certain number of animals and/or resources) they get the VP printed on it. Otherwise they must discard it. At the start of the game each player received three "Village Fair" tiles for the first 3 seasons: the winter "Fair" tiles should be acquired during the game as they appear from the bag, together with the extra farms and buildings. Those winter tiles have a "lower" value if they are in Summer or Autumn (minimum 4 VP): but if you show them in winter, they will grant a higher value (minimum 6 VP). They usually need animals/resources AND precious stones: some of them may be a source of many VP if you are able to repeat up to four times a certain combination of stones. Precious stones are not available on the first turn and only in Winter you have enough cases for this "business". Therefore, during the game, the players should pay high attention to the "Winter" Fair" tiles that are offered.

At the end of each turn the players take the board with their Keyper and all the workers; then should decide the new combination of their folding board for the next season: they may twist the board as they wish and as the bending allows them, but the final combination must include the case with the new season symbol.

At the end of the fourth season the game is over: the players add their VP and adjust the score track on their personal board: we discovered that the score will usually pass the 99 points indicated on the boards, so we added an extra "100 VP token" to keep track of the first 100 VP.

After a dozen of tests, we still must find a "winning" strategy: the options on each turn are so many and the interaction is so high that the best suggestion that we may give is ... look at the situation when it is your turn and try to get the maximum! Not a very helpful suggestion isn't? We found that joining the opponents is always the best way to get more actions and/or resources, so we strongly recommend it. Doing this unfortunately reduce quickly your reserve of workers, so you will have the opportunity to lay down some of them (re-doing again good actions) before your opponents will use the last keyple.

During the first test the players tend to under-evaluate the boats or they use them only to get new resources: then you realize that if you SELL resources you get VP and therefore in the following games you try first to get enough extra resources before purchasing your ship and use them mainly to make VP. It is not unusual to arrive to 25-30 VP at the end of the fourth season, with this system, so this is a good booty.

Acquiring a folding board is not such a decisive action: as soon as you realize that

you may get a minimum of 5-6 workers in anyone of the four boards you may even forget about your Keyper, playing at your best even on boards already reserved by the opponents, in order to maximize your resources. And if an opponent will finish the turn with 10-11 workers this is not a problem: he can use only 8 of them and you will be able to lay down some of your workers to double a few actions and/or get extra resources.

Do not forget to place your farms and buildings in your personal board, including some good extra tiles purchased in the common market. When Autumn arrives, it is time to improve your buildings in order to maximize the final VP.

One tiny criticism before more praise: The rules are not the best I have seen; sometimes it works better to repeat some suggestions in different parts of the rules, to better clarify them.

In all other aspects, Keyper is a very interesting game and he already won the GOBLIN MAGNIFICO prize in Italy (<https://www.goblins.net/articoli/goblin-magnifico-e-scelto-dai-goblin-2018-atteso-epilogo>) after a hard selection between the best games for experts. ☑

Pietro Cremona

INFORMATION

Designer: Richard Breese

Artist: Vicki Dalton

Price: ca. 60 Euro

Publisher: R&D Games / HUCH! 2017

www.hutter-trade.com

PLAYERS:
2-4

AGE:
12+

TIME:
120+

EVALUATION

Eurogame, worker placement

Users: For experts

Version: multi

Rules: de en it jp pl

In-game text: no

Comments:

Interesting board formed by folding squares

* Nice graphics * Good interaction among players

* Rules not the best possible ones

Compares to:

Keyflower

Other editions:

Character Edition, R&D (en)

