Exploring British History: Changes in leisure and entertainment since 1837.

To explore and discuss key changes in children's toys, the reasons for the changes and the impact on people's lives.

Toys

Since the beginning of time children have had toys to play with, they may have been no more than a rock or a stick, but children have always found ways to entertain themselves.

Victorian Toys

It is important to remember that although Victorian children did have toys they were very expensive to buy. Even wealthy children were allowed only a few toys. For the poor, they had handmade toys if they were lucky. Poor Victorian children would rarely have had more than one toys which would have been precious to them.

Poor children would save any money they could to buy toys such as; marbles, spinning tops, kites, skipping ropes, hoop and stick or find ways of making their own.

Victorian Toys

Rich children played with dolls and tea sets, marbles and toy soldiers. They would often have rocking horses and even simple clockwork toys.

Towards the end of the Victorian era changes in technology and manufacturing led to toys becoming more and more manufactured and more affordable. Colour printing make great changes allowing games and books to be eye-catching and appealing.
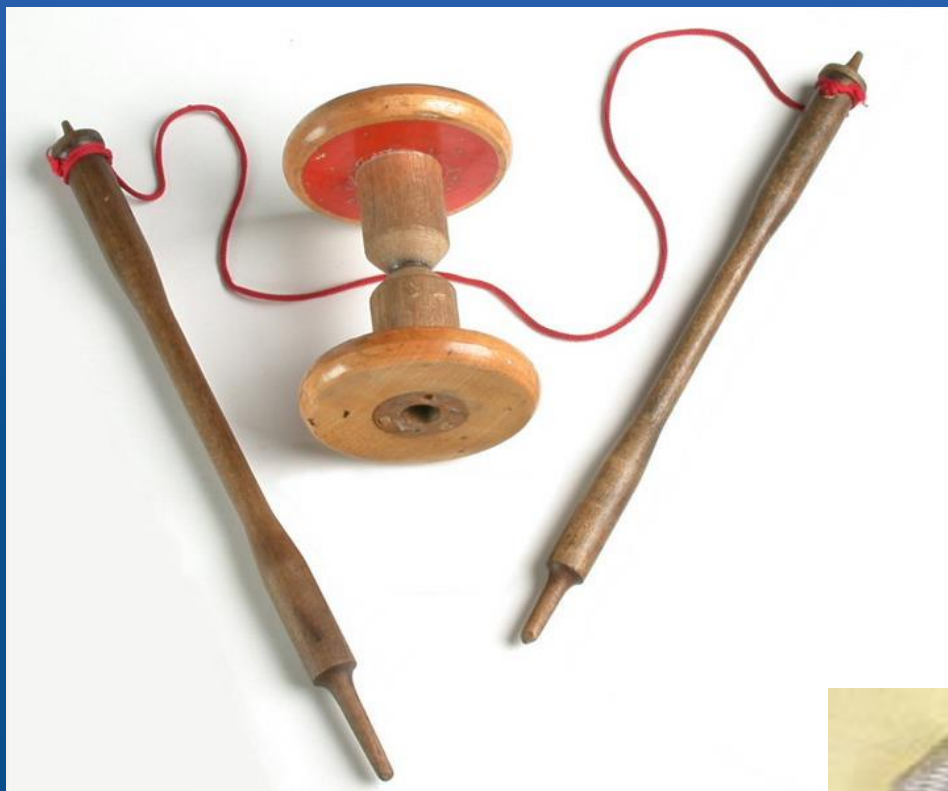
Toys in the war years

The early 1900s saw an increase in the range of toys, for those who could afford them. The early 1900s saw the invention of the teddy bear, named after the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. Demand was growing for toys that were challenging both creatively and requiring skills, to meet this demand new products were created; modelling medium Plasticine and engineering sets Meccano were among the few.

Toys in the war years

The events of the First World War affected all aspects of life including children's toys. Manufacturers were quick to produce war related board games and puzzles. After the war Meccano continued to be a great success, and new technologies allowed affordable miniature railways to be produced by manufacturers including Frank Hornby.

Toys in the war years

The 1930s saw a range of toys available to all. The developments of real life trains and records being broken increased the demand for Hornby model train sets, Dinky toys soon followed. The 30s saw the introduction of Monopoly and the development of much loved toys such as the doll. One major development of the 30s was the expansion of Disney as a brand. Mickey Mouse grew in popularity along with other new characters such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Donald Duck and Pluto.

Toys in the war years

After the expansion and development of the 1930s came the reality of the Second World War. Most toy factories switched from toys to producing items to help the war effort. Materials were in short supply and new toys made were produced in economic card, the majority reflected the wartime events.
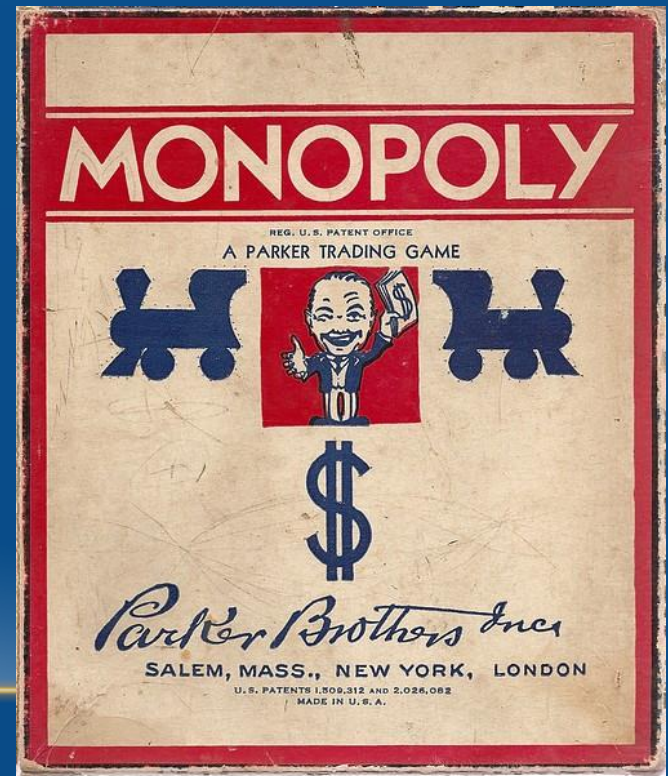
Post war toys

The 1950s saw the toy industry bounce back. New companies and products filled the market. Matchbox, Airfix and Corgi all provided new opportunities for imaginative minds. The hula hoop swept the nation and new malleable plastics changed the way dolls could be produced.

New characters appeared including Dan dare captured the imagination of young minds.

Post war toys

Television was to change the world of toys forever. TV and film companies realised that there was an audience out there wanting more and more. They decided that they could produce a wide range of toys games and other items branded with the characters from their shows and films.

The 1960s were dominated by toys linked to TV shows , however there were a few non TV toys that proved to be successful. The Spacehopper was the craze that had massive appeal, Scalextric was also launched in the 60s. However by far the most important releases of the 60s were Action Man and Barbie.

Toys in the digital age

Television continued to dominate the toy industry in the 1970s, the Muppets, Star Trek and Dr Who being some of the many. The development of manufacturing technologies also had an impact, the constant development of plastics meant toys were being made more and more cheaply and with more detail and realistic features.

Television was also to have another impact on toys. Manufacturers realised the power of the TV to persuade. They began to aim adverts at children and they began to work. The pressure of the adverts began to show, especially prior to Christmas. There also began to be the pressure to have the latest toy. IN the 70s it was the Chopper or the Skateboard.

Toys in the digital age

Merchandise was by now part of everyday life. Film and TV regularly produced toys, games and other products. The 1980s saw another massive innovation that would again change the toy industry. The 70s had seen rapid advances in computer technology, and by the 1980s those advances enabled companies to create games consoles for the home. The 1990s saw these advances continue with hand held consoles becoming increasingly popular. New games created new characters and Sega challenged Nintendo to be the best console.

Toys in the digital age

Children's TV and film continued increasing and creating more demand for new toys. The stars of the 90s were Toy Story, Turtles and Teletubbies.

The 21st Century has seen technology continue to dominate the toy industry, the invention of the tablet and development of mobile phones created a new app industry aiming their fun and addictive games at children.