

Toys of the Past Comparison (BTCAC)

This collection introduces children to how toys have changed over time. Pupils can compare toys from different eras, investigate materials and identify similarities and differences. They can explore what toys were like in the past and how they compare with other similar toys and toys from today.



Contents: -

1. 1 x Victorian Cup & Ball and plastic Catch-it Cone
2. 1 x Tudor Five Stones Game and Bag of metal Jacks
3. 1 x Ancient Greek Spinning Top and Victorian style Spinning Top

Sequence the toys into a physical timeline and investigate each of the toys and how they were played with. Ask questions such as, What changes can you see? How have the toys changed over time? Are there toys from the past that we still play with today? Sort the toys into Old and New or Then and Now and think about what makes a good toy. Ask parents, grandparents and others about the toys they played with as a child and discuss favourite toys.

Other Key questions when looking at toys through time:

- What materials are the various toys made from and why?
- How can I decide if a toy is from the past or a modern toy?
- Can you describe what a “toy” is?
- How do you play with this this toy?

All About the Artefacts

1. Cup and Ball Game

The cup and ball was created in around the 14th century, but it was very popular in Europe during the 16th Century. It was improved and modified in different ways since then, the Cup and Ball toy is essentially a wooden handle with a cup at one end and a small ball, attached with a string.

The main goal of the game is to get the ball into the cup. While the concept is very easy, mastering the game can sometimes be challenging. Alternatives and adaptations such as “Ring and Pin” or “Kendama” remain popular toys around the world.

Cups and balls came to England from France where it was called 'Bilboquet'.

Children will love making their own cup and ball game which they can enjoy playing with. They can write their own instructions for how to play follow the instructions to develop their skills.

2. Five Stones/Jacks Game

The earliest version was known as ‘Knucklebones’ and was played in Ancient Greek and Rome times using real sheep or goat ankle bones.

During the Tudor period both children and adults played variations of this game. Similar to Jacks, the goal is to throw a stone in the air and while in the air pick up the other stones from the ground before catching the tossed stone. There are various ways to play the game.

Learn how to play the game and create own versions of it using found objects such as small stones or buttons. Write instructions for playing the game and set up class contests.

3. Spinning Tops

The spinning top has been around for thousands of years. The simplest (and oldest) of wooden toys is the wooden spinner (or top). It was designed to be spun onto a flat surface until its energy is lost, it starts to wobble and eventually stops. Some tops have bodies with symbols, numbers or inscriptions, and would have been used like dice to inject randomness into games, or for divination and ritual purpose (e.g. Dreidel). The origins of spinning tops can be traced back to ancient civilizations, with depictions found in ancient Greek and Egyptian art.

Webster's dictionary defines the top as "a child's toy shaped somewhat like an inverted cone, with a point at its apex upon which it is spun, usually by unwinding a string." But there are a number of references to tops that do not include use of a string.

Greek pottery was decorated with scenes showing top spinners, some of which include women playing with tops. Whilst tops for play are likely to have been made of wood, clay tops could have been used for religious purposes, to honour the gods. Some may have also been a sign of affluence and at times were placed in tombs as an item to be taken into the afterlife. The Greek top would have been spun by wrapping a piece of leather around the ridges.

During the Victorian era tops were often made from metal or shiny wood. Many modern tops have cool designs and some even light up when they are spun.

Play with spinning tops and challenge your friends to see whose top can spin for the longest.

Look for games and toys in Bruegel's painting 'Children's Games' c.1560 How many can you spot? What toys and games are still played today? Make an alternative picture to show modern day toys and games this could be done by cutting out pictures of today's toys and adding them to your own picture.



Watch 'Toys with Magic Grandad' to explore toys from the past.

Share books such as 'Lost in the Toy Museum' by David Lucas, 'Old Bear' by Jane Hissy, 'Toys and Games' by Sally Hewitt. Discuss how toys have changed and stayed the same.

Useful Websites:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/articles/zbs2h4j>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z8x7m39>