Hall Place Teachers Notes
Toys and Games of the Past

Suitable for ages and abilities from Reception to KS2.

Topics covered	How are modern toys different from those in the past? What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain?

Life in the Victorian period was very different to modern times. This session aims to help children understand these differences. Every child loves to play and this session uses our extensive handling collection. Children will not just see but will play themselves into the past.

We will start with a short history of how toys have changed throughout time (not very much actually until the advent of factories and mass-produced toys). We will begin by looking at basic wooden toys used since ancient times with a yo-yo, cup and ball, whip and top plus a wooden hoop. We will then look at the development of mechanisms in toys using a simple acrobat, dancing clowns and merry-go-round - evolving from wood into metal. If time allows, we will look at how the technologies developed in toys influenced the growth of other industries, for example how the zoetrope toy led to the invention of moving picture films.

Teachers will be asked to divide their class into four groups. It is very important that each group has at least one adult for health and safety reasons. These groups will then play with:

1. yo-yo, cup and ball, whip and top
2. wooden hoops
3. hoop-la
4. skittles

Health and safety
Please note that all toys are wooden and could easily become dangerous if children are not adequately supervised. All toys are checked and sanded down regularly; splinters are rare but can occur.

Learning outcomes

- What were toys from the past like?
- Personal link with the past by exploring examples of toys and learning their names and how to play them.
- Developing an understanding of key historical concepts like continuity and change connected with technology, people's roles and the similarities and differences between living in the past and today.

- How toys have changed over time including technology, design, decoration and materials.
- To experience role play – playing with replica toys commonly used in the past
- How toys in the past were different from toys today and the reasons for these changes.
- Forces – push & pull, distance.
- Observe, discuss & demonstrate how forces are used to make toys move.
- Observe & discuss the different materials toys are made from and the transition from natural materials to man-made materials.
- Vocab – modern, new, old, before, after, Victorian times, mechanism.
- Recognise some of the characteristics of toys of the past.
- Draw conclusions about the Victorian period, or the past .
- How life has changed in the Bexley locality and what it was like to live in Hall Place & Bexley in the past.
- To find out about the local area from different resources – objects, archive photographs, museum collection & historic buildings.

Activities

- Observe & discuss different toys from the past & how they worked, linking them with prior knowledge/experiences, the mechanisms that move the toys.
- To put the knowledge and learning into practice and play with a series of replica old toys. Learning which forces to use and how much force to exert to make a toy work. when to be gentle, calm & patient.
- How toys work from personal experience, how practice develops skills.

Evaluation

- Discussion and questions between the session leader and members of the group. Students answering questions to check their comprehension.
- Interaction with objects – using an object to show understanding of what it is made from & what it was made for.
- Enacting play to show understanding of how the toys work including the correct sequence of key processes needed.

Pre & post visit activities

- Have you seen our loans box service? We have a Toys of the past box, or if you wish to widen your discovery of the Victorian era, there is also a Victorian Schools box and a Victorian Homes box. Visit the Loans Box page on our website to find out more.

- Ask parents and grandparents about the toys they played with as children? What were they and how were they used?
- Create your own classroom museum – either with old toys that your parents played with (they might still have them in the attic) or are there any toys you have now that is the modern version of an old toy? i.e. ball, doll, teddy bear etc. Print out a picture of the old toy to place near the modern one to see the similarities and differences.

Background History

Toys and Games of the past

In the past children were treated as small adults: they were dressed like adults, had to behave like adults and poorer children also had to work long hours just like adults. This left little time for playing, unless you were wealthy.

Toys have existed as long as people. In Ancient Egypt balls, spinning tops and dolls have been found in tombs. Children also played with hobby horses, toy soldiers, knuckle bones, spinning tops and marbles.

Until the middle ages most toys were home-made. Ordinary children made toys from wood, cloth and bone. They played with kites, hoops and dolls. In medieval times, toy makers began to appear at markets and fairs, but most were still too expensive to buy. Children from very rich families could be given toys made out of silver, bronze and glass.

It wasn't until the 19th Century that people's opinion of children started to change. Slowly people realized that children were not just small adults and that they could learn from playing. During Queen Victoria's reign new laws were passed to let children from poorer families work less, this gave them the opportunity to attend school and play more.

The increased demand for toys led to their mass production in small factories. Toys evolved quickly and wooden toys were painted in bright colours. The use of expensive metal for toy making revolutionised toy designs. Metal was stronger than wood and much more flexible to use. Tin trains, small lead soldiers, toy cooking ranges and wind-up moving toys became the most sought after for wealthy families.

Families who found the new range of toys too expensive continued to use their imaginations to create a game from nothing or whatever was available. Making dolls from old shoes or pegs and pieces of rag; playing games using pebbles or sticks, these were all common amongst the poorest families.

The development of different plastics in the 20th Century changed toys forever. Plastics were easy to use and cheap to manufacture. The toy market saw a huge increase in toys being produced in plastic from the 1950s onwards. In the 21st Century the continuing development of

computers has led to serious health concerns because children's play has become too static and less mobile.

We have the Victorians to thank for the modern concept of childhood. Today there are toys for children of all ages, from newborn babies to 100 year old centenarians.