# Toys from Brent's past Learning Resource

## Brent Museum and Archives Services for Schools

You can find out about our services for schools and groups by visiting our schools page where you can find out about workshops either at your school or at Brent Museum and Archives, loans box hires as well as independent visits to Brent Museum and Archives at The Library at Willesden Green. We have a range of online learning resources too.

To make an enquiry about a workshop please complete the online form.

You can view our online catalogue and search for images near your school. We have more than 10,000 images of Brent in our collections. To enquire about a loans box hire please complete the online form. To enquire about an independent class visit please complete the online form on our schools page.

Visit our local area studies pages where you can find out about your school's local area history which will support your own knowledge of the area.

Do get in touch with our Learning Officer at museum.archives@brent.gov.uk if you have any queries.

The activities in this learning resource are inspired by our Toys from Brent's Past Loans Box. However, you can use whatever you have to hand alongside the images and content to explore the themes in your classroom.

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# Introduction

**Brent Museum and Archives offers the following ways to engage with our toy collections – you can combine them in the way that suits you best.**

- **Online only:** learners engage with our Toys from Brent's Past videos and the activities below as part of your scheme of work at school.

- **Workshop at your school or Brent Museum and Archives:** learners handle old toys and explore and discuss different sorts of old toys using replicas. Workshops are 1 hour long and do not require any prior knowledge. Up to 4 workshops per day can be booked at your school and up to 2 or 3 workshops per day at Brent Museum and Archives (depending on lunch requirements).

- **Handling session at your school or at Brent Museum and Archives:** learners build on their knowledge of old toys, gained through watching our Toys from Brent's Past videos and taking part in the activities below **before** their 25 minute handling session which focusses on handling old toys and replicas of a range of old toys. This option reduces the cost/per learner and enables more learners to engage with the materials when time is limited. Up to 8 workshops per day can be booked at your school and up to 4 -6 workshops per day at Brent Museum and Archives (depending on lunch requirements).

- **Hire of our Toys from Brent's Past Loans Box (KS1):** The range of old-fashioned toys in this box represent the changing styles and fashions of toys from past times to the present day. There are a large range of toys to play with. The materials encourage exploration of changing materials and comparisons between old and new. The accompanying archive material shows historical images of children at play in Brent. Please note: the toys in this loans box are very similar to the ones used in the workshop and so we recommend that you do **not** hire a loans box **and** book a workshop/handling session for the same class.

## Aims of the videos and activities in this resource

- To explore toys from the past using objects and images

- To compare these toys with their modern equivalents
- To explore the materials used for toys in the past
- To compare these materials with modern equivalents

## Learning outcomes

- Pupils will understand how we use objects to learn about lives in the past
- Pupils will understand how we can use living memory to understand how local people lived in the past
- Pupils will understand the chronology of toys and the change in materials used to make them, learning to recognise the difference between old and new.
- Pupils will relate their understanding of materials to toys around the world and the use of recycled materials.
- Pupils will have the opportunity to expand their vocabulary around materials and their properties and also around forces and movement

## Toys from Brent's Past YouTube videos

**Toys from Brent's Past playlist on YouTube**

## Queenie

## Angela

# Activities

## 1. Discussing toys

Before you watch the YouTube videos, ask the class to put up their hand if they like to play with toys. Then divide the class into twos and threes and ask them tell each other about their favourite toy. What describing words can they use about the toy? Does it do something like light up or make a sound? Does it use batteries?

Hold up a modern toy if you have access to one, preferably one that uses batteries to work, and ask the class what they think it is made of and what energy is being supplied (electricity) to make it move/light up/make a sound. Highlight that plastic and batteries weren't used in very old toys so that if a toy uses either of them it can't be very old.

Note for teacher: Angela was made around 60 years ago and Queenie was made over 100 years ago.

After you have watched both video clips, ask the class:

- Who was made first? Do you think it was Queenie or Angela? How can we tell? (Prompt answers relating to the use of plastic and electricity in Angela – these two things tell us she was made after Queenie).

- Can you remember any of the materials used to make Queenie? (Allow 1 minute for discussion in pairs before feedback as a class. Prompt answers by referring to the different parts – arms, hands, shoes, face, etc).

- What was your favourite thing about Queenie?

- What did we learn about Angela? How old do you think she might be? What makes you think that?

- What was your favourite thing about Angela?

- Are the dolls we play with today similar or different to the dolls in the videos? (Choose individuals to respond with features, i.e. 'I have a doll that is made from plastic' or 'my doll has a dress made from fabric' and ask the rest of the class to respond with whether this feature is the same or different to Queenie and/or Angela with a show of hands.)

- Can a doll be made out of recycled materials? (Yes, we can make dolls out of absolutely anything! For many years, leftover material was used to make a 'rag doll' for children and clothes pegs were used to make peg dolls, as there were very few materials available for making toys. Factories today are able to make thousands of dolls and other toys quickly, which has reduced the cost of these sorts of toys, meaning that they are generally a lot cheaper now than they were in the past).

- What other items could you use to make a doll? (Spoons, bottles, scraps of fabric, socks, straws, pipe cleaners, toilet roll tubes and old glue sticks). This last discussion point leads nicely into the opportunity for a make activity.

## 2. Making your own toys from recycled materials

Begin with a short discussion before you start making, to provide pupils with context for understanding toys from the past and other cultures and places in the world:

- Did people make toys out of recycled materials in the past?

- Why do you think people play with recycled material toys today? Cheaper, enjoyment from creating one's own unique toy, access to toys in different parts of the world. What kinds of things might they/you play with?

- Could we make some of our own toys from recycled materials instead of buying them from the shops?

**Online instructions for making toys**

Paper dolls

Cardboard roll dolls

Crocodile puppet

Flying rocket mice

Cardboard roll space shuttle

Paper and found object robot

Junk robot




## 3. Listening to Brent residents talking about toys from 50s-70s

The following interview clips are from Brent residents (Sudbury) talking about toys from their own and their children's childhoods. Audio files are on the Changing Sudbury website (scroll down to 'Toys and leisure').

**Barbara** "Mobo, I'm not sure what it was called, Mobo… and it was a horse, and it was metal, and you sat on it and it sort of went up and down, you'd push with your feet and it went along. And um, I must have been quite young at the time 'cause they weren't very big, and it was a toy that probably was quite expensive. And I remember being allowed to ride on it one day and um, it fell over and it scratched, and I was so scared that I was going to get into trouble, I left it there, and ran home (laughs). It wasn't, it wasn't anything serious, but um, um that was a sort of toy I think Mojo? No, I can't say, I can't say exactly what it was called but it was er a popular at the time, at the time it was quite popular. And us girls also had dolls prams. We would take our dolls prams out into the street and then there was a bit of um jealousy amongst the girls, who had the best pram, and the best doll (…) I had a doll's pram yes, I loved mine. I actually had a replica Silver Cross, which was, you know, a small version of the, the, the, because we all had, mothers had big prams then we didn't have pushchairs very much and buggies they hadn't been invented. So, mums had big prams, so little girls wanted um, a similar thing, you know. So I had a Silver Cross."

Barbara as a girl in the mid 1950s and in 2019

**Viv** “You know, we used to have skipping ropes. Yeah, we used to love the kids used to skip... We used to play er games on the pavements, you know you chalk up, I don’t, probably you won’t even know, we used to have a game called leap frog, and somebody would bend down, you’d leap over them.”

Viv in 2019

Shirley in 2019

**Shirley** “For Michael, as a little boy, he had a drawer full of Action Men. In fact when we moved house the young couple who bought it from us had a young son, and they left… he left the drawer absolutely full of his Action Men for this other little boy who was absolutely thrilled to bits to get all these. And for my daughter, first of all she had you know that’s one in a box, um, miss oh what was she called? Very super model. Oh I can’t remember the name.” Interviewer: “Barbie?”. Shirley: “Yeah, Barbie Doll… She, they had Barbie dolls for a while and they bought all the various costumes but her, the hit which came in while she was a little girl was Tiny Tears. It was the very first real looking baby on the market, and you could give it a dummy, you could give it a little sip of water from a tiny little bottle and it would wet its nappy, you could change its nappy. So they were soft, made of rubber and cuddle-able. And they were all the rage, all the little girls walked out with those in their prams and adored their Tiny Tears. So things went in fashion for children, Barbie very much went out of fashion because it was rigid you couldn’t cuddle it and take it to bed with you, she was so you know stiff. And you couldn’t do anything with the arms and legs, they didn’t move very much. But for a while the children loved them because they were um, you could dress them, so you could adapt them to mini-skirts, very much Mary Quant, and short mini-skirts and short jumpers.”

## 4. Handling toys

The following activities can be completed using items from our Toys from Brent's Past Loans Box or with any materials and toys you have to hand.

**Materials**

- Separate pupils into 4 groups. Sitting in a circle on the floor with the toys in front of them is best but tables will also work well if space is limited.

  Group 1: marbles and marble bridge
  Group 2: spinning top and wooden hand spinner
  Group 3: 2 x metal yo-yos and 2 x wooden yo-yos
  Group 4: flip book and teddy bear

- Allow 5 minutes to play with the toys, with each child taking a turn with the toys allocated to their group. When complete, ask each group to place their toys back in the middle of the circle/table.

- Introduce the concept of the materials used to make toys, explaining that some materials are helpful for making certain toys, but they might not work as well for others. Sometimes the materials used can also tell us how old a toy is, e.g. they didn't have plastic 100 years ago so we would never find a toy that old made from plastic. (The wooden and plastic diablo can be shown to assist understanding of this).

- Give groups 2 minutes to discuss what materials have been used to make their toys and how old they think they might be before feeding back to class. Aging toys can be quite difficult so it may be helpful to categorise as 'very old' (more than 100 years), 'old' (more than 50 years – may have been played with by their grandparents), 'not very old' (might have been played with by their parents when they were children) or 'new' (something they might play with today).

- Discuss the properties of materials by demonstrating the puzzle – what is it made from? Cardboard is light, would glass work well for a puzzle? Why not? And also the wooden aeroplane – what material is it made from? What else could we use to make a good aeroplane? Would plastic work? Would clay or stone work? Why not?

- Allow each group 5 minutes to discuss why their toys are made from certain materials – what properties make them work well? What words would they use to describe their materials? The adjective list below may help:

  Hard
  Soft
  Strong
  Fragile
  Smooth
  Rough

Squishy
Solid
Cold
Warm
Heavy
Light
Shiny
Dull

Feedback as a class and summarise pupils' new knowledge.

**Extension activity**

Materials needed:

- 2 x plastic bottles
- 8 x different toys
- 8 x different materials (these can be anything – a twig, a metal spoon, a packet of jelly, a piece of card, wool, a plastic fork, a scrap of fabric, a rubber, a china cup, a wax candle)
- Space to sit in a large circle

Instructions:

- Place the toys in a circle around one plastic bottle and the materials in a circle around another
- Gather pupils in one large circle around both
- Choose one volunteer to spin the materials bottle, then another to spin the toys bottle. Decide as a class if the material you have landed on would be suitable for this particular toy. If not, what might we use instead?
- Continue to choose volunteers, spin, and generate discussion.
- Explain that all of the materials (with the exception of jelly or chocolate if you have chosen to use a wild card material) have been used to make toys at some point in history – china may seem like a very poor choice for any toy, but the fact that it was a popular material for dolls faces shows us that these toys were played with very differently in the past, i.e. they were meant to handled with care and attention, or simply looked at and stroked.

## 5. Exploring Forces

Introduce the concept of forces by watching this BBC Bitesize clip, before using the toys to demonstrate movement and forces.

Set up a small table at the front of the classroom so that all of the children can see the toys as they are demonstrated.

**Push and pull**

Toys: marbles and wooden aeroplane

Demonstration:

- Marbles: choose 1 volunteer to demonstrate the marbles, place one marble at the edge of the table and ask the volunteer what they will need to do to make the marble move (make it clear that they are not allowed to pick the marble up from the table!) If your volunteer needs encouragement, the rest of the class can offer suggestions to describe the movement that is needed. Prompt as needed until they reach the word 'push', then allow the volunteer to 'push' the marble in order to make it move to the other end of the table.

- Wooden aeroplane: choose two volunteers to demonstrate the plane, with one pupil at each end of the table. Ask how they can make the aeroplane move between them. The initial response should be to 'push' it from one end to the other. Pause once this had been demonstrated and ask how else they might move the aeroplane. It may help to place the aeroplane in the middle of the table. Prompt until they reach the word 'pull' and ask the volunteers to demonstrate 'pulling' the plane from one person to another. Explain that this works for any toy on wheels.

As a class: use hands to demonstrate pushing and pulling whilst chanting the words 'push' and 'pull'. They may enjoy doing this in seated pairs with their hands joined, with one pupil pulling and then pushing before the other takes a turn.

**Gravity**

Toys: Jacob's ladder and wooden cup and ball

Demonstration:

As the concept of gravity is a little more difficult to grasp it may be worth beginning with the question: Can anybody tell me what gravity is? (Gravity is a force of attraction that pulls together all matter - anything you can physically touch. On Earth, it is gravity that pulls us down and keeps us on the ground. If it wasn't there all objects – including humans – would just float up into the air). Does anyone know if there is anywhere that gravity doesn't exist? (In space. That's why astronauts float around!)

Ask for 2 volunteers to demonstrate the Jacob's ladder and cup and ball, explaining that both use the force of gravity to pull downwards and make the toys work.

As a class: stand up with hands in the air and demonstrate the downwards pull of gravity by pulling the arms down and squatting at the same time.

**Twisting and spinning**

Toys: spinning top and yo-yo

Demonstration:

What force do these two toys use to move? How would we describe their movement? (Twisting and spinning - spinners work because they are twisted and released). Choose two volunteers to demonstrate the twisting and spinning movement of the toys.

As a class: stand up, find a space and twist from the waist. Pause before allowing some controlled spinning if space allows and they can avoid bumping into each other!

**Clockwork**

Toys: clockwork rabbit

Demonstration:

How can I make this toy work? What do I need to do? Ask for a volunteer to demonstrate. What is this kind of toy called? (A wind up or clockwork toy). How does it work? (When the key is twisted and turned a metal coil is wound up inside, storing lots of energy which is then released when we let go).

As a class: Stand up and wind your key (mime winding a key in your side), store up all of that energy inside and then clap your hands together just like the rabbit banging his cymbals.

**Summary**

Toys use forces to move in lots of different ways. Do any of our toys use more than one force? Ask for a volunteer to choose and demonstrate a toy that they think uses more than one force.

Cement pupils' new forces knowledge by playing a 'Simon Says' style game, calling out all of the forces in a random order for the pupils to act out.