

Toys

A selection of toys that children would have played with during the early 20th Century.

Links to QCA schemes of work

History Unit 1— How are our toys different from those in the past?
[KS 1]

History Unit 11— What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain? [KS 2]

1] **Tin Bucket** **Wealthy** families began to visit the seaside in the 18th century, but it wasn't until the 19th century that the **seaside holiday**, as we know it, developed. It was made possible by the **expansion of the railways** in the **1840s and 1850s**, which made long distance travel affordable for most people. Initially the first toys for the beach were made of **wood**, but soon **tin** became more common, especially for buckets as it gave more opportunity for **colourful patterns and pictures**. Today most seaside toys are made of **plastic**, which means they no longer become rusty.



2] **Writing Slate** In Victorian schools, very young children first learned to write their letters in sand trays using their **fingers** or a **stick**. When about seven, they progressed onto writing on **slates** which were made from **quarry slate** set in **wooden frames**. A **slate pencil** was used to form the letters which was often **sharpened** on the **school wall**. Children had to bring a **damp cloth** to **clean** their slates but often they would use their own **spit** and the **cuff** of their **sleeves!** This is the origin of the phrase '**to wipe the slate clean,**' which we still use today to mean **to make a new start**. Children in Victorian schools were supposed to keep very **quiet** but **slate pencils** made a **shrieking noise** as they were drawn over the slates, so the children did **not** work in **silence!**



3] Cardboard egg The earliest Easter eggs were hen or duck eggs decorated and painted in bright colours at home with vegetable dye and charcoal. The 17th and 18th centuries saw the manufacture of egg shaped toys which were given to children at this festival time.



Decorative eggs were made in a wide range of materials from the late 18th to mid-19th centuries. Tin and cardboard eggs and bunny figures first made in the early 20th century once held sweets. The Victorians had cardboard, 'plush' and satin covered eggs filled with Easter gifts and chocolates.

Album of cut-outs In the late Victorian age children would buy these a few at a time on a perforated sheet and they would be either cut out or pushed out and then stuck into an album. The album could contain hundreds of pictures and subjects that could be covered were: pets, Christmas, folk stories, children, toys, shops, trades people, customs.....all captured in the style that we call Victorian.



5] Avro York plane This model of the Avro York plane was a passenger and freight plane of the 1940s. It measured 23.9 metres in length and had a wingspan of 31.1 metres. When it was fully loaded it



weighed almost 30,000kgs. It had 4 Rolls-Royce engines and its maximum speed was 479 km/hour. Winston Churchill used this type of plane during World War II. Toy fighter and bomber aeroplanes became popular because of the two World Wars as well as civilian airliners and seaplanes.

6] Dinky phone box, Corgi taxi, Esso blue tanker Dinky toys were the first British toy cars produced using advanced die-casting techniques which made them cheaper and easier to make than tin toys. The first Dinky toys appeared in the 1930s in both Liverpool and Bobigny in France but World War II brought production almost to a standstill for several years. When it resumed Dinky Toys produced cars, trucks, buses, military vehicles, aircraft, ships, dolls house furniture and farm implements and virtually every boy and many a girl in the 30s, 40s and 50s would have played with them. Corgi toys came onto the market in the 1950s and then in the 60s Tri-Ang bought out Dinky.



Production ceased in the **1980s** but the original models are now **collectors'** items and many of them are **rare** and can be **valuable**.

7] Fishing game This was a very **popular parlour** game of which the **Victorians** were very fond. Some of these games have been **forgotten** but many have been **passed down** and remain **firm** favourites even today. The Victorians played **cards, board games, 20 questions** and **charades** and in the evening members of the family would gather round a **piano** or an **organ** to have a 'sing.' The idea of the fishing game was to **catch** the fish with the **highest value** using the **rods** with the **magnets** on the end. The person with the **highest score** would obviously be the **winner**.



8] Marbles Our modern game of marbles came from the **ancient Romans** and their game of 'nuts,' as it was called and finds its **beginning** with **Christmas** when the **Romans** gave each other **gifts** which included **bags of 'nuts'** and **marbles**. The first marbles were made of **clay, stone** or real **marble** but they were known as either '**bowls**' or '**knickers**,' The Victorians loved to play marbles – their favourite ones were made of **real marble** and were thought to be the **best** for **shooting**, but they were very **expensive**. Marbles made of **glass** were **cheaper** and for the people with very little money, ones made of **clay** like the ones in the box were played with. Children collected marbles from the **tops of drinks bottles** which were **sealed** with a **marble**. In some games with marbles you **throw** your marble, but most games use **shooting**. To shoot **properly** you need to **put the knuckle of your forefinger** on the ground with the marble **balanced in the bent**



forefinger. Then you need to put the **thumb behind the forefinger** and release with whatever force you like. There are many **variations** of marble games that can be played.

9] The Japhet and Happy Book. The book features the Noah family of characters and their wooden pets as they appeared first in the Daily News and then in the News Chronicle. [Japhet was the son of Mr Noah and Happy was a small bear cub.] The Noah family was also known as 'The Arkubs.'



Rag Doll Traditionally rag dolls were stuffed with cloth, sawdust, straw or later kapok [from the Kapok tree which produces a silky cotton which is light and fluffy and resistant to water and decay] . The life



sized doll is a lithographed cloth cut out doll and it has a date of 1900 marked on the side of each foot. Many of the dolls were home-made for children but from about the 1850s rag dolls were produced commercially and were printed on cloth or had their features hand painted in oils.

11] Toy Trumpet A popular Victorian toy. In Victorian times on Sunday school trips children would gather together to climb on board old fashioned buses and every child would blow on his tin trumpet in rhythm but out of tune to the songs sung by adults. On the return journey home they would again sing and play their trumpets.

