

toys & games

— AN ORAL HISTORY —



— EAST MIDLANDS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE —

...a different perspective on history

The East Midlands Oral History Archive

The East Midlands Oral History Archive is a partnership between the Centre for Urban History at the University of Leicester, the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR), and Leicester City Museums and Library Services. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to establish the first large-scale archive of oral history recordings for Leicestershire and Rutland.

Its first aim is to retrieve as many existing recordings as possible, and to then make them accessible through a website, an on-line catalogue, newsletters and edited CDs and cassettes. In addition to the Record Office itself, some of the recordings will also be available in libraries and museums. EMOHA also aims to generate new oral history recordings through its own programme of interviewing, and by providing advice, training and support for community groups, museums and heritage organisations, students and other individuals who are interested in developing their own projects.

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Toys and Games

An Oral History

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East Midlands Oral History Archive

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Introduction

The resources in this book and CD are intended to help children think about the toys and games that their parents and grandparents played with when they were children, and those that they play with themselves. The earliest memories on the CD were recorded during the 1980s and are predominantly male because they were collected for projects which focused on traditional workplaces. Later memories are recorded specifically for the purpose of this collection and so cover a broader range of interviewees and experiences.

This collection comprises a wealth of childhood memories, from tales of mischief and adventurous play and days when toys were a luxury, to crazes like Action Man, hula hoops and computer games. Listeners will be able to identify with many aspects of these and may be surprised to find that, despite apparent changes in childhood since the early twentieth century, they also share many of the speakers' experiences.

Acknowledgements

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As We Played: the Changing Context of Childhood

What sort of things have influenced the nature of children's play during the period covered by this CD?

Organised games became increasingly popular from the later 19th century, both in schools and in churches, chapels and other organisations which ran activities for young people. Like the drill taught in schools, they were designed to instil discipline, promote physical fitness, and encourage a sense of 'team spirit' – qualities regarded as increasingly desirable in the context of anxieties about the 'delinquency' of the young, and the longer-term survival of Britain and its Empire.

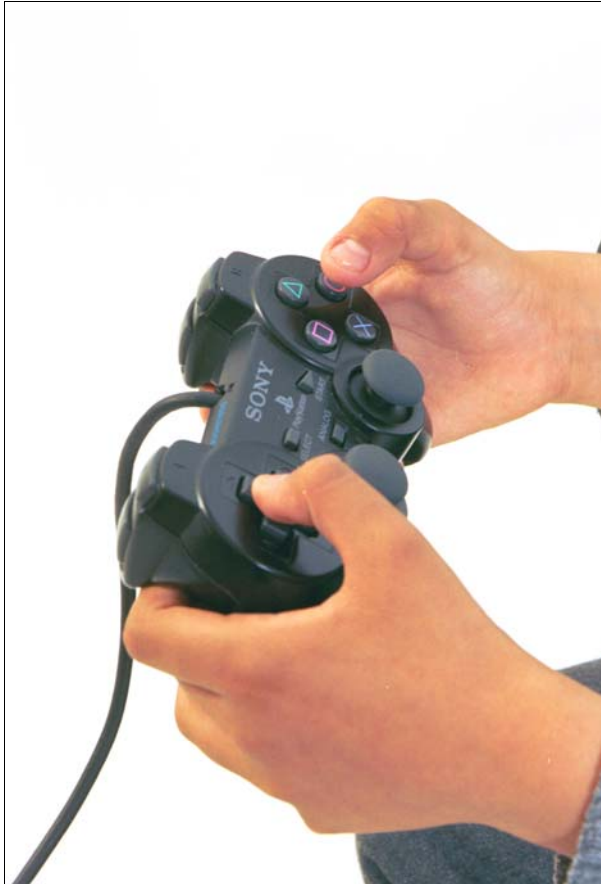
However, most of the games recalled on this CD fall outside this world of adult control and supervision. They are testimony to the ingenuity, imagination and spontaneity of children who often had little in the way of 'formal' play equipment – and to the oral tradition through which the complex rules by which games are played are guarded and passed on. It was the children themselves who enforced these rules, and who were also responsible for deciding – through personal preference, the formula of a rhyme or 'dib', or on the grounds of gender alone – who might be allowed to play. It was the children, too, or their chosen 'Captain', who devised the tactics designed to 'see off' the opposition.

It is often said – and repeated in several extracts on the CD – that children were safer in the past than they are today. Certainly the fear of assault or abduction was less than it is today. Such incidents may have been less widely reported, but it is debatable if they were quite so rare as is assumed. The assumption that rural areas provided safer 'playgrounds' than the towns is also worth reconsidering. The seemingly innocuous fields and woods of the countryside concealed a multitude of natural hazards such as bogs, streams, the legendary 'bottomless' pools and pits, bulls and potentially deadly plants – to say nothing of the 'dare-devil' attractions offered by railway lines and rural industrial sites such as mines and quarries.

Context

The urban child often had easy access to the countryside as well. Even after the extension of the Borough boundaries in 1936, few children in Leicester were more than a mile or two from open countryside, and thought little of walking five or more miles a day to enjoy it. Working class families in both town and country were often large in number, and the desire to escape from cramped and overcrowded houses meant that – weather permitting – children spent much of their time out of doors. However, if more spacious and comfortable houses encouraged a trend towards





home-based play, this was reinforced by the growing dominance of the motor car in the post-Second World War period, as urban streets ceased to be the safe haven for play of so many childhood memories.

As many of the extracts on the CD suggest, a lack of 'formal' equipment or shop-bought toys was no real hindrance to play. Children used whatever came to hand – sticks as cricket bats, rolled up paper or pigs' bladders as footballs, fire hydrants or manhole covers as 'goals', dolls made of old socks or cotton scraps, skipping ropes made of old ropes or – in East Africa – sugar cane grass. Nevertheless, the relative affluence which many (but by no means all) working class families enjoyed from the 1950s has been a major influence on the nature of their play.

Even in the 19th century there was no lack of manufactured toys available to those with the means to buy them, and by the 1850s child labour itself was extensively employed in manufacturing 'penny' toys for the less well off, largely made from paper and wood. Technological advances including clockwork

mechanisms and hollow metal toys increased the range of what was available, while mass production techniques gradually brought down their price. During the 20th century, new materials such as plastic became available, along with the wonders of the microchip in more recent decades – and new media for advertising toys, games and equipment to an audience which currently has a say in around £30 billion of spending in the UK each year. Like radio and television before them, computers have also encouraged more sedentary and possibly solitary pursuits.

However, as the later extracts on the CD demonstrate, despite all the changes of the last century, and the undeniable 'commercialisation' of childhood in some respects, there still remains ample scope for imaginative and spontaneous play.

Cynthia Brown
Project Manager
East Midlands Oral History Archive
June 2002

Track Listings

The CD which accompanies this book is made up of three sections that focus on different aspects of childhood:

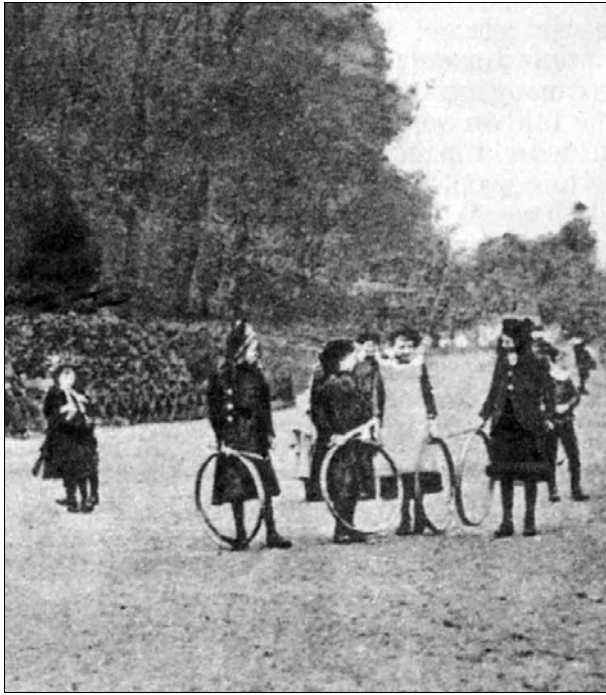
- **Playing Out** features memories of children's play outside of school. This includes playing alone and with friends, as well as memories of dangerous play and mischief.
- **Playground Games** focuses on the games that children played at school.
- **Toys** includes memories of toys that children enjoyed or dreamed about.



Playing Out

- 1 **Whips, tops and mischief. a) 2 Males, born 1905 & 1909:** describe playing with whips and tops on roads, 'Tin-a-Lurkey', bowling with hoops, and 'Spirit Rapping'. **b) Female, born 1902:** describes making mischief by knocking on front doors.
- 2 **Tin-a-Lurkey. Male, born 1908:** talks about playing 'Tin-a-Lurkey' and collecting balls from coconut shys at the annual wake to use for playing hockey and cricket.
- 3 **Sound Yer Holler. Male, born 1920:** describes playing 'Sound Yer Holler', making a barrow and 'making your own fun'.
- 4 **Tin-High-Hockey. Male, born 1917:** describes playing 'Tin-High-Hockey' outside and playing in a tank from the First World War. Talks about making his 'own fun in those days'.
- 5 **Making Bows and Arrows. Male, born 1908:** describes how children made their own fun; describes how to make bows and arrows, and kites from willow, and shooting trout.
- 6 **Adventurous Play in the Colliery. Male, born 1920:** describes adventurous play in the colliery, sliding down spoil heaps and igniting gun-powder from the powder sheds!
- 7 **Adventurous Play in the Quarry. Male, born 1932:** describes games played with Second World War bomb cases, and escapades in the quarry.

Children playing in Bushby in the late 1950s. Even a wheel barrow could be a toy in the right hands. As tracks 27—39 show, toys haven't always been something that were bought in the shops. In the past children often had to make their own fun.



Girls play with hoops in Spinney Hill Park around 1900. Girls would generally have had wooden hoops while boys frequently wanted the faster and more dangerous metal versions. Reproduced by permission of the Leicester Mercury.

8 **Shrove Tuesday.** a) **Female, born 1913:** talks about seeing toys for sale in shop windows and the Shrove Tuesday tradition of boys playing with whips and tops, and girls playing battledore and shuttlecock. b) **Female, born 1902:** talks about playing battledore and shuttlecock on Shrove Tuesdays, marbles, and skipping.

9 **Football.** a) **Male, born 1908:** describes playing football with rolled up socks, or a freshly killed pig's bladder. b) **2 Males, born 1905 and 1909:** describe playing football with a pig's bladder.

10 **Ponies, Tennis and Cricket.** **Female, born 1919:** describes having ponies and walking in the winter, and tennis parties and cricket in the summer. Talks about how, as a girl, she had to keep score, rather than play.

11 **Wartime Games.** **Female, born 1929:** describes playing snobs, hopscotch, double ball, hide and seek, hoop and stick, playing with cigarette cards, and collecting comics during the Second World War.

- 12 **Girls and Boys.** **Female, born 1951:** explains how girls and boys played different games; describes games played by girls: double & triple ball, skipping in the street and 'French' skipping.
- 13 **Elastic and Poddy 1-2-3.** **Female, born 1964:** describes games played in and out of school: 'French' skipping, Poddy 1-2-3, and collecting conkers.
- 14 **Summer Holidays in Leicester.** **Female, born 1929:** talks about playing indoors in bad weather with dolls and jigsaws. In summer played in the different parks in the city of Leicester. Describes catching the tram to visit the parks.
- 15 **Childhood in East Africa.** **Female, born 1963:** talks about making castles in the sand outside her home in East Africa and sailing paper boats during the rainy season.
- 16 **Childhood in Canada.** **Female, born 1972:** talks about how Canada's climate means that people play games outside a lot of the time. Describes skipping in the summer and skating in the winter.
- 17 **Foggy Hounds and Poddy 1-2-3.** **Male, born 1977:** describes playing two different running and hiding games.

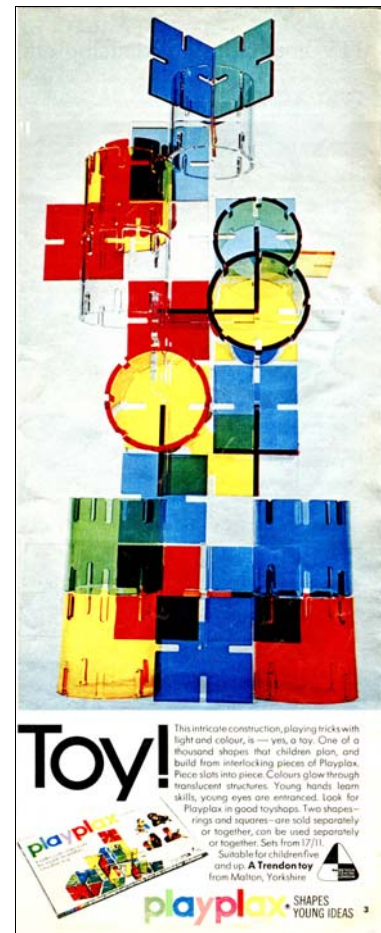
Playground Games

18. *Breaking Windows*. Male, born 1927: describes playing rounders in school, leapfrog, throwing, breaking windows and being punished.
19. *Utchi-Ker-Bum*. Male, born 1932: describes playing a complex and dangerous game called “Utchi-Ker-Bum”.
20. *British Bulldog*. Male, born 1961: describes playing ‘British Bulldog’ in the playground.
21. *Tetherball*. Female, born 1972: describes playing a Canadian playground game called Tetherball.
22. *Elastic and Hopscotch*. Female, born 1974: talks about how hopscotch and elastic or “French Skipping” became easier as you got older.
23. *Clapping Game*. Group of girls, born 1992: demonstrate a playground clapping game & explain why they like playing it.
24. *Spy Game*. Female, born 1992: describes playing ‘the Spy Game’ in the playground.
25. *Team Run, Racing and Tig-Bob-Down*. Group of boys, born 1994: describe how to play Team Run, Racing and Tig-Bob-Down in the playground.
26. *Freepod*. Two boys, born 1991: describe how to play Freepod.



Toys

27. **Improvised Toys. Female, born 1910:** talks about how she had to improvise her own toys, even though her father ran a toyshop.
28. **War Toys. Male, born 1944:** describes toys played with by girls and boys, Second World War tin soldiers and how plastic was a new material for toys.
29. **Action Man. Male, born 1961:** describes collecting a wide range of Action Man 'figures' and accessories (not 'dolls!').
30. **Hula Hoops. Female, born 1951:** talks about playing with hula hoops, bikes, scooter and roller skates.
31. **Sugar Cane Skipping Ropes. Female, born 1963:** talks about making skipping ropes and dolls while growing up in East Africa. Also remembers playing with stones as marbles and using yellow soil to make clay.
32. **Construction Kits. Female, born 1951:** describes playing with different kinds of construction kits.
33. **Card Games, Board Games and Jacks. Female, born 1963:** talks about the games played by her family in East Africa.
34. **Dolls, Hospital. Female, born 1951:** describes playing with dolls and having one mended at the Dolls' Hospital in Leicester. Talks about 'Tressy' doll.
35. **Cooking, and Making Dolls. Female, born 1951:**
Describes playing with cooking utensils in her parents shop and making dolls from cotton wool. [There is some background noise on this track]
36. **Board Games. Male, born 1977:** describes playing Battleship, Monopoly and Operation with his mother.
37. **Sindy and Barbie. Female, born 1974:** talks about Sindy and Barbie dolls.
38. **Early Computers. Male, born 1977:** describes playing with his Commodore 64 computer.
39. **Computer Games. Male, born 1994:** describes playing on his computer and with other toys in his home.
40. **Dolls. Female, born 1994:** talks about how much she enjoys cuddling and playing with her dolls.



An advert for a 1970s construction toy called PlayPlax. Extract 32 describes a similar toy called Build-It and remembers that Lego became even more popular later on.

Links to History Curriculum and Scheme of Work

Key Stage 1

Historical interpretation and enquiry:

- Identify different ways in which the past is represented.
- Find out about the past from a range of sources of information, including eye-witness accounts and ICT-based resources.

Unit 1: How are our toys different from those in the past?

- Use oral sources to find out about toys in the past.
- Identify similarities and differences between old and new toys.

Key Stage 2

Historical interpretation and enquiry:

- Recognise that the past is represented and interpreted in different ways, and give reasons for this.
- Find out about the past using a range of sources of information, including ICT-based resources.

Unit 9: What was it like for children in the Second World War?

- Use a range of sources, including the recollections of people alive at the time.
- Learn that the war affected children in different ways.

Unit 13: How has life in Britain changed since 1948?

- Identify a range of sources of information available for the study of different times in the past.
- Learn that the type of information available depends on the period of time studied.
- Learn how personal memories can be used to find out about the past.

Unit 18: What was it like to live here in the past?

- Learn that there are different sources of information for their area in the past.
- Learn how oral sources can help us to find out about how people lived in the past.
- Learn that historical accounts are often influenced by personal opinion.

Cross-curricular links

Literacy Key Stage 1

Listening: sustain concentration; remember specific points that interest the children; make relevant comments.

Standard English and Language Variation: learn some of the main features of spoken standard English and how speech varies in different circumstances.

Text level: Year 1, Term 3:

- **T 18:** read recounts and begin to recognise generic structure.
- **T20:** write simple recounts linked to topics/personal experience.

Text level: Year 2, Term 1:

- **T15:** to write simple instructions, e.g., to play a game.

Literacy Key Stage 2

Listening: identify the gist of an account and evaluate what the children hear; recall important features of what they hear.

Standard English and Language Variation: learn the grammatical constructions of spoken standard English; learn how language varies according to context and purpose, between standard and dialect forms, between spoken and written forms.

Text level:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Year 3, Term 1: | T22: to write simple non-chronological reports from known information. |
| Year 3, Term 2: | T16: to write instructions, e.g., rules for playing games |
| Year 3, Term 3: | T22: experiment with recounting the same event in a variety of ways, e.g., letter, story, news report. |
| Year 4, Term 1: | T25: to write clear instructions.
T27: to write non-chronological report. |
| Year 5, Term 1: | T24: to write recounts based on subject, topic, or personal experiences.
T25: to write instructional texts, and try them out. |
| Year 6, Term 1: | T11: to distinguish between biography and autobiography, fact, opinion and fiction, implicit and explicit points of view and how these can differ.
T14: to develop skills of biographical and autobiographical writing in role, e.g., of historical characters. |
| Year 6, Term 2: | T20: to discuss the way standard English varies in different contexts. |

Cross-curricular links

PSHE & Citizenship

Key Stage 1:

3a: make simple choices that improve the children's health and well-being.

3g: learn rules for, and ways of, keeping safe.

4c: identify and respect the differences and similarities between people.

Key Stage 2:

2i: appreciate the range of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the UK.

4c: think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs.

4e: recognise and challenge stereotypes.

Religious Education

Key Stage 1:

Unit 1D: Beliefs and Practices: learn that religious festivals are celebrations of symbolic significance for believers; discuss the difference between ordinary holidays and festivals.

Unit 2C: Celebrations: learn that festivals are occasions for remembering particular events in religions; learn that religious festivals reflect cultural differences and beliefs.

Numeracy:

Key Stage 1:

Organising and using data: solve a given problem by sorting, classifying and organising information, using objects or pictures, in a simple list or table, pictogram or block graph.

Key Stage 2:

Handling data: organise, represent and interpret data in tables, charts, graphs and diagrams.

Examples of Suggested Activities

History Key Stage 1:

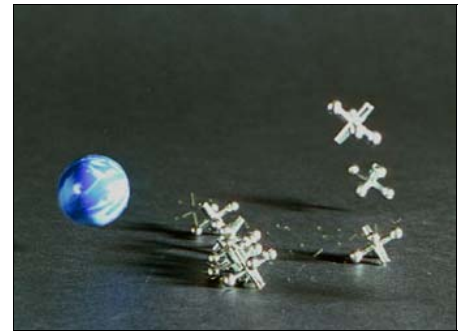
Activity A

Learning objective: to speak about everyday objects in the past.

Resources: extracts 28, 29, 32, and 38, photographs/pictures of toys; a range of old toys.

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts. Identify the toys discussed. Are they similar to any toys the children have today? How are they similar? Why are there differences?
- Ask the children to describe a toy from the past, saying how it is different/similar to toys they have today.



Jacks were enormously popular and took a variety of forms. On extract 12 you can hear about playing with jacks during the Second World War, while extract 31 describes a version of the game played in East Africa.

Activity B

Learning objectives: to learn that oral sources can be used to find out about the past; to identify similarities and differences between old and new toys.

Resources: extracts 5 and 29 from the CD; photographs/pictures of toys; a range of old and new toys, including a kite and action figures, e.g. toy soldiers, Action Man, and other contemporary figures, etc.

Activity:

- Give some background to the extracts the children are to listen to, e.g., what we can find out about the past from listening to them.
- Listen to extract 5 (male speaker, born 1908, describing how he made his own bows and arrows, and kites, from willow). Compare this with the materials used to make kites today.
- Listen to extract 29. Look at a selection of old and new toys. Identify the materials they are made with. Sort them into sets, e.g., type of material, old/new, etc. Discuss the type of materials used in old and new toys. How do they differ? How are they similar?

History Key Stage 2:

Activity A

Learning objective: to learn how personal memories can be used to find out about changes in Britain since 1948 (e.g., popular culture).

Resources: a selection of extracts, e.g., 27, 28, 29, 30, 32 and 36, a range of old and new toys, photographs of toys.

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts, making notes of what each speaker discusses. Look at a selection of toys and/or photographs of toys. Sort them into chronological order, giving reasons. Identify how they are similar/how they differ from toys today. Identify any differences, or similarities, between ‘toys for girls’ and ‘toys for boys’ in the past and today. What has changed? What has stayed the same?

Activity B

Learning objective: to learn about the toys and games children played with during the Second World War; to consider the effect of the war on these.

Resources: extracts 7, 11, 28; photographs/collection of toys from the Second World War, e.g., playing cards of wartime fighter planes (see right).



Activity:

- Listen to the extracts. Discuss the similarities and differences between the toys and games played with during the Second World War and those the children have today, e.g., collecting cigarette cards or ‘faggies’ and football cards today.
- Ask the children to identify the ways in which the war affected the toys and games that were available, e.g., collecting American comics, playing with defused incendiary bombs, playing cards that showed war planes, tin soldiers used to recreate battles between the British and the Germans.

PSHE and Citizenship Key Stage I

Activity

Learning objectives: make simple choices that improve their health and well-being; learn rules for, and ways of, keeping safe.

Resources: extracts 1, 4 and 6, 7.

Activity:

- Listen to extracts 1a (memories of playing with toys in the road), 4 (memory of playing in the street), 6 (memories of playing in a colliery) , and 7 (memory of playing in the quarries). Consider why these are not safe places to play. Draw parallels with dangerous places to play today, e.g., near water. Make a list of safe places to play. Draw up a list of rules for safe play, e.g., always telling someone where you are, finding a safe place to play, going with a responsible adult, etc.



PSHE and Citizenship Key Stage 2



Activity

Learning objective: to recognise and challenge stereotypes.

Resources: extracts that highlight the differences between ‘toys for girls’ and ‘toys for boys’, e.g., 8, 10, 12, 28, 29, 30, 32, and 37, toy adverts and catalogues.

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts and make notes of the types of toys and games played by girls and boys. Compare these with the types of toys and games the children play today. Do they agree that there are certain toys or games that are specifically for girls or boys? Should this be the case? Consider the ways in which toys are targeted at either girls or boys, e.g. through use of colour, packaging, advertising, etc.

Literacy Key Stage 1

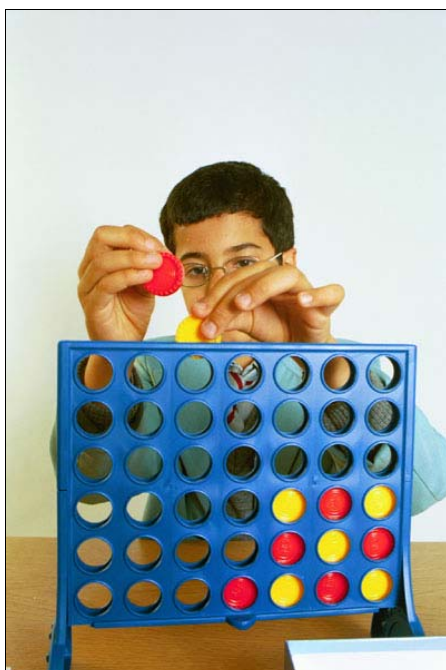
Activity A

Learning objectives: to remember specific points from oral accounts that interest them; to write simple recounts linked to personal experience.

Resources: a selection of extracts, e.g., 15, 16, 33, and 40; examples of different toys and games.

Activity:

- Discuss which extracts the children enjoyed, giving reasons.
- Model how to write a recount of a personal memory or experience linked to the theme of toys and games.
- Children write their own recounts, e.g., ‘The best toy I have ever played with...’



Activity B

Learning objectives: to remember specific points from oral accounts; to write simple instructions to play a game.

Resources: a selection of extracts, e.g., 1, 3, 24, and 25, examples of written instructions on how to play with some toys and games.

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts. Ask the children to describe the rules for playing these games. Are they clear and easy to follow?
- Choose a well known game. Model how to write the rules for playing it
- Children write their own rules for playing games.

Literacy Key Stage 2

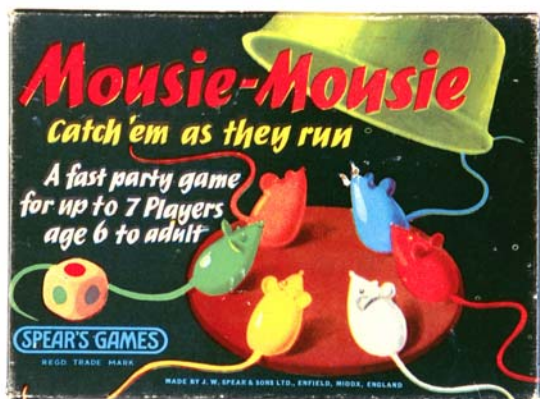
Activity A

Learning objectives: to identify the gist of an account and recall important points; to write instructions for playing games.

Resources: a selection of extracts, e.g., 1, 3, 20, 24, and 25; examples of instructions for playing games.

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts. Discuss the main points of each, e.g., how clear are the descriptions of the toys/games? Could the children play those games from the spoken instructions? Discuss the benefits of having written instructions.
- Model how to write a set of instructions to play one of the games from the extracts. Discuss the differences between the oral and written versions.
- Children write their own instructions for playing with a toy or game.



Mousie-Mousie is a fast and exciting game that has existed for over thirty years. The game's box and design has changed, but the basis of the game has stayed the same across the generations.

Board games like Mousie-Mousie can often have very complex rules. Yet children are likely to be familiar with many of them. Asking children to explain the rules of their favourite game or getting them to produce their own rules can be very rewarding.

Activity B

Learning objectives: to distinguish between biography and autobiography; to distinguish between fact and opinion.

Resources: a selection of extracts, e.g., 5; 15, 17, and 19, examples of autobiographical and biographical writing.

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts. Discuss the main points from each, e.g., vivid memories of breaking windows, playing British Bulldog in the playground.
- Consider the perspectives given in each of these, i.e., personal memories and first hand accounts. How does this affect what the speakers recall/recount, e.g., is it true that children and teenagers today expect everything to be laid on, as the speaker in extract 5 suggests? Is this fact or opinion?
- Identify the differences between a biographical account and an autobiographical account, e.g., first person narrative.
- Discuss the differences between the language used in an oral and a written account.
- Children write a biographical passage about one of the speakers, based on the extracts heard.

Numeracy Key Stage I

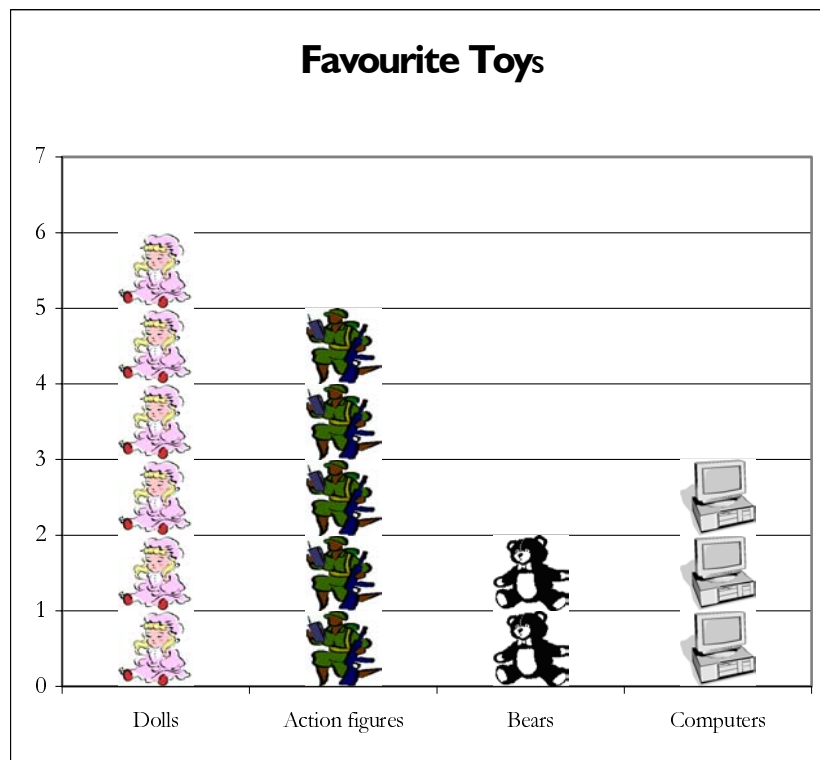
Activity

Learning objectives: to classify and organise information.

Resources: a selection of extracts; a variety of toys and games.

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts. Make a list of the different toys and games. Use these in conjunction with the toys and games to sort in different ways, e.g., old and new, materials, 'girls' toys' and 'boys' toys', etc.



Numeracy Key Stage 2

Activity

Learning objectives: to organise, represent and interpret data in tables, charts and graphs.

Resources: a selection of extracts

Activity:

- Listen to the extracts. Identify the different toys and games played in the past and by children today.
- Design a data collection table.
- Children collate information on toys and games from class members, e.g., favourite toys, and represent in graph form.

Religious Education Key Stage 1

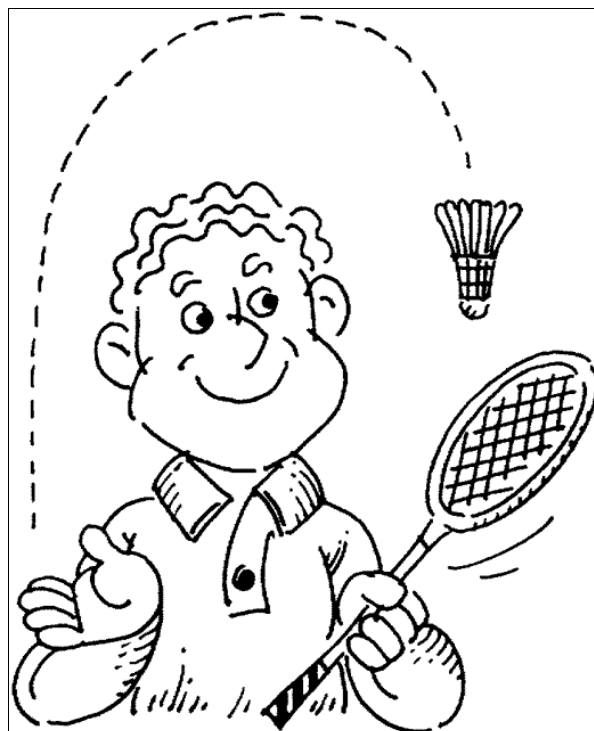
Activity

Learning objectives: to learn that religious festivals are celebrations of symbolic significance for believers; to discuss the differences between ordinary holidays and festivals.

Resources: extract 8; photographs and artefacts associated with religious festivals.

Activity:

- Listen to extract 8. Discuss the significance of Shrove Tuesday for Christians. Explain that it was traditional for children to play battledore and shuttlecock on Shrove Tuesdays, as it was a religious holiday. In Leicester, this was also known as 'Shuttlecock Day'. Christian schools would be closed and other festivities would take place, e.g., pancake races.
- Identify activities and customs associated with other religious festivals and celebrations.
- Draw out the children's own experiences of festivals. Compare these to their experiences of ordinary holidays.



Battledore and shuttlecock was probably developed in Greece around 2000 years ago. It gradually spread throughout the world reaching Britain by the Middle Ages. It is now more commonly known as badminton.

Religious Education Key Stage 2

Activity

Learning objective: to learn that festivals are occasions for remembering particular events in religions; learn that religious festivals reflect cultural differences and beliefs.

Resources: extract 8; photographs and artefacts associated with religious festivals.

Activity:

- Listen to the extract. Discuss the significance of Shrove Tuesday for Christians. Explain that children in the past traditionally played battledore and shuttlecock on Shrove Tuesdays, as it was a religious holiday. In Leicester, this was also known as 'Shuttlecock Day'. Christian schools would be closed and other festivities would take place, e.g., pancake races.
- Compare Shrove Tuesday customs with customs associated with other religious festivals. Identify any similarities and differences.

Transcripts

We experience oral testimony in a very different way from written sources. Transcribing oral testimony can be useful as it makes the extracts easier to follow, and allows people to read them quickly. Transcripts can also be useful for teaching literacy as they enable you to compare and contrast the oral and written versions.

Unfortunately there is not space to transcribe all of the extracts on the CD, so we have included a selection below.

Extract 6: Adventurous Play in the Colliery

I was involved with them in a lot of the childhood escapades especially around the colliery after it had closed, and it was nothing for us to go out day after day, roaming round as a small gang of children. Of course there was no danger those days of being got at by anybody. We used to go out in the fields and we used to go round the colliery, climbing up the screens, and the only danger of course was the mine shafts, which were not particularly protected because they were just left as they finished the work. The one thing that always sticks in my memory was the old colliery spoil bank which they used to take all the coal that was of no use, dump it on the top and let it slide down. And it was, I would say it was about 150 feet high and probably occupied two or three acres by the time it was completed. But as children we used to go on top of this bank, and there was an old shed there, I remember, this family of Kinsons and myself and one or two more of them, we dismantled part of this shed with corrugated iron sheets, turned up the front and decided that we'd do a skiing effort down the side of this spoil heap. Of course those days it was a matter of spontaneous combustion, and part of it was alight and smouldering, so four of us used to get on this sheet of zinc, push it over the edge and slide down this toboggan, do a bit of tobogganing down this thing, but one day we all came off and landed in this hot ash and quite a few of us got our legs burnt, and shoes.

Other occasions round the colliery there used to be what they called the powder house, and I often shudder nowadays to think of the tricks we used to get up to and why we were not blown to, weren't blown sky high, because when the miners used to go down the pit they used to collect this powder from the powder house in little tins which they had with a screw top on, and there'd be a man in the powder house issuing this gunpowder which they used to blow the coal underground, and they'd fill these little tins and just knock it, put the cap on, hand it to the miner and he'd go away, but, under the door of this thing when they shut it there was powder floating about which had dropped from the tins. As children, we used to scrape this powder together on paper, take it a few yards away, and we used to have great fun in lighting it, and seeing it go fzzzz not realising that it could have tracked itself back to the powder magazine. However, fortune must have been on our side because it, nothing ever happened.

Extract 7 – Adventurous Play in the Quarry

Oh there was a game we used to play. It was a sort of, an adaptation of skittles, this at Sapcote 'cause it was only what, twelve, fifteen miles perhaps from Coventry. There were quite a few families evacuated from Coventry during the war. And one lad had got hold of a couple of incendiary bombs, well, obviously you know they'd been defused or whatever, and we used to set these up against the wall and throw the ball at these, and whoever knocked them down was obviously the winner, you see. We used to reckon we were throwing at Hitler, or, that's one for Hitler and that's one for Goering. Oh yes, yes I remember that.

But we used to, then we used to roam across the fields and of course there were abandoned quarries there. We used to climb down into these quarries, when I go back and look at the way we used to climb down into all of these quarries, oh it did frighten us, I go weak at the knees now. Course, the great thing there was to go down in the quarry and pinch one or two, three matches from home, and have a fire. Oh we used to enjoy them, get this fire blazing, the fire, sitting round the fire, if you got, if you could get one or two potatoes, put them in the middle, they were more burnt than cooked, burnt black on the outside and raw right in the middle, but oh we did enjoy 'em, yes, they were lovely.

Did your parents tell you not to play here, or, was it, you know, did anybody worry about your safety then, like they do, like they do now?

No, I don't think so. They didn't know. Well they didn't know about us going down the quarry. Well they probably did, there was one quarry that was reasonably safe, but there was another one that was very very, well it was, it was dangerous, there's no doubt about it. And there was a chute, there was, at one time there was, there were two rails that went from the quarry bottom to the top, and there were old trucks there, and we used to get, not the actual truck, but just the bare base and the four wheels, and we used to drag this up as far up these rails as we could and jump on and go down, but the only thing was you had to remember to jump off because it overturned. Oh, sweat, it's making me sweat now thinking about it!

I can see!

This transcript forms a pair with extract 6 as both describe different forms of dangerous play. Do they sound more or less dangerous when you read them or when you listen to them? Note how you can't hear people's tone of voice or the sound of their laugh when the words are written down.

This transcript could be used along with extracts 10 and 16 to show how important accent is in conveying meaning. How much of what we get from listening is in the words, and how much in accent or body language?

Extract 15—Childhood in East Africa

We used to have, um, my Mum used to make skipping ropes out of sugar cane grass, the long green grass you get, and we used to smooth it out with, you know, stones wrapped up in cotton wool so that it's not spiky and doesn't hurt our fingers, and then tie two or three long grasses like that, sugar cane grasses together to make a long rope, and put knots, big knots at the either side as handles, and we used to use that as skipping ropes. She used to make us dolls, because in Africa they make their own blankets and sheets and that, you know, and pillowcases and that, so they used to have a lot of cotton wool left over, so she used to make us dolls out of cotton wool and put little sticks for arms and legs and that, and little things like lentils for eyes and ears and things like that.

So would your mother, your mother would make all this?

Yes. And I have a memory of all this, the doll, the cotton wool doll, because my brothers used to break them up, and, you know, to tease us and that. We used to have, play with marbles as well, but it would be, it wouldn't be proper marbles that you get here. It would be very smooth pebbles or stones, and we used to call them pilla, and you know, we used to play with them like jacks. You call that jacks here. We used to call them panchkya, and you know, we, especially like school holidays and that, all the children would run out looking for the smoothest stones they could and have these to play these games. Um, we also used to get yellow soil there in certain parts, um, um, near the school, the ground, the soil there was yellow, and we would bring that in baskets, and you know, turn it into like clay, mix water with it and make little doll house furniture and little toys, and dry them out in the sun, so you'd do it in the afternoon and they'd be ready the next day to play with.

Can you remember anything you made?

Yes, little tables and chairs, and little dummies, little dolls and things like that. My brothers made cars, cricket bats, little ones.

You could use this transcript as an example of what the rules for playground games look like when they are written down. It is easier to understand the rules of a game when they are written down, but the oral version conveys more of the enjoyment of actually playing the game.

Extract 17—Foggy Hounds and Poddy 1-2-3

When I was younger I used to play like Foggy ‘Ounds and Poddy.

What’s, what’s Foggy ‘Ounds?

Foggy ‘Ounds is where you split up in two groups, and you, basically one group’s chasing the other group, and you all hide and then, you don’t just stay in one place so you kind of keep moving. So if you see someone who’s on the opposite team after you, then you’d start moving about and shifting about, and then when the team, you’d have some, some great chase on your hands, just run around for ages until you caught them. And when you caught them you had to say ‘Caught, one, two three foggy ‘ounds’ or something, something like that, you had to say something.

So that was a sort of cross between hide and seek and tag, or.

Yeah, kind of, it was just the fact that you didn’t stay in one place. You got, when you got seen you had to run and you had to try and keep away from everyone. And then you had Poddy One, Two, Three, which was kind of the same, except you stayed in one place, and then when they spotted you they would have to run back to their base, and they’d have to say ‘Poddy one, two, three, caught Jamie behind the red car’. And then what you had to do was, as soon as you’d seen them see you, you had to start running towards their base, and you had to get there before them and kind of say ‘free pod’, and if you didn’t, if you were the first one to get caught, then you were the one that had to do the, you were the one who had to do the looking round for everyone the next time round. I used to love that game, we used to play that every night, running round front gardens hiding behind next door neighbour’s front wall and stuff like that.

Extract 23—Clapping Game

OK, are you going to tell me, would you like to tell me something about one of the games that you play in the playground.

We play a clapping game and it's about my friends and family. My sister Alice made it up and we added things to it.

Mum is a teacher. Sit down, shut up.

My nephew is a DJ. Scratch, scratch, scratch, scratch.

My niece is a singer. La la, yeah, yeah.

My sister is a dancer. Tap, tap, tap, tap.

That was brilliant. Thank you. Do you like playing that game, then?

I like it because we worked on a bit of it, and then we added loads more, and it's fun to do because we get to sing it and then you do it with your friends, so lots of people can join in.

That's good. Why do you like it?

I like it because it's good for playing with your friends, and you can't fall out in it and things.

'Cos you can do it with your friends, and it's like, you can do all your family in it and stuff.

This transcript provides another good example of how much is lost when these oral extracts are transcribed. The tune and rhythm of the rhyme are lost. Ask the children to write down the words of skipping rhymes that they know.

The Games Children Played *a written memoir by Mr Ray Culley of Leicester (born 1924)*

Many of the games which were played during my childhood and early youth have now vanished. The great god of the internal combustion engine has cleared the side streets of play areas, and the cries of children indulging in group games that were common 60 years ago. I have tried to remember some games that we played, but some of the details may be a little vague due to the passing of time.



Conkers

This was a seasonal game. Gathering conkers from the trees was the prelude to the stringing. Then the challenge to anyone who had a conker that had been 'blooded' in contest and rated with a number of wins. If you started from nil and defeated a 'fiver', your conker gained the status of a 'sixer'. The short string method adopted by myself to hit an opponent's conker caused many a sore rapped knuckle.

Cowboys and Indians, and Soldiers

Battles and wars were fought with bits of wood as guns. Arguments as to whether you were still a combatant after being pumped full of lead caused many a heated argument.

Cracked slab jumping

Any slab which was cracked had to be jumped, so to get along a pavement – jumping one or two and then attempting three – was a challenge.

Door knocking and window rapping

This was a nuisance game. To knock a door or rap a front window, and then run away, especially on a dark night, was a pastime indulged in by children. The idea was to see the owner appear at the door and see no one in sight, while hiding nearby.

Entry wall climbing

When playing hide and seek, you could go into the covered entry between two houses, and by bracing your rear portion on one side, with your legs straddled over the gap, you could push yourself up several feet to the top so as to be concealed, as the entries were not lit. Some householders used the entry to dry washing on lines along the walls, and in haste many children have ruined a morning's wash trying to avoid the laundry.

Fag card skimming

Prior to the 1939 war, cigarette manufacturers gave away small coloured cards in each packet of fags. These were most collected by children, and were in sets or subjects, eg., footballers, cricketers, and film stars etc.. They were a kind of minor currency to children with little pocket money, and could be swapped if you had more than one of each for one you wanted to make up the set. Any surplus cards were often used in games. For instance, cards would be placed vertically against a wall, and – kneeling on the gutter edge some six feet away – you used your own cards to skim across the gap to knock down those on the wall.

Indoor games

On wet days, or evenings with the family, games like Snakes and Ladders, Tiddleywinks, Draughts and Ludo were played, and books from the Library were read. No television watching, with eyes glued to a screen. Imagination was used instead of the 'equipment' that seems to be essential today.

Scrumping

A pastime during the season was scrumping apples or pears – in fact, any fruit was a target. To get something free was one part of the game, and the avoidance of 'authority' was a game in itself!

Shuttlecock and battledore

This game was a forerunner of badminton, the same type of shuttlecock being used, but instead of a racquet a bat called a battledore was used. There was no net, just hitting to get the shuttle past your opponent or to keep the shuttle in flight. This game and many others can be traced back several hundred years.

Street cricket

The choice of first to bat was decided by tossing the bat in the air, and the cry was 'hill or hollow'. This game was played with any soft ball available, and an old bat or piece of wood, a door or wall being the wicket with the stumps chalked on it. The ball was usually delivered underhand, and any number of children could play. A run was scored by running to the bowler's mark.

Street football

This game was played with any ball available, with any number of participants, and sometimes even GIRLS! There was no referee, so local lads decided on the spot whether or not a goal was offside or not, and at times this caused minor mayhem. It's interesting to think that this game was banned by statute in the early Middle Ages because it was interfering with the local lads' archery practice!

Whip and top

You would try to whip your top several yards and still keep it spinning. Carrots could be used instead of tops.



Oral History: The Next Generation

If you found this pack useful you could develop an oral history project with your class. Taking part in an oral history project enables children to develop a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Interviewing people directly about their experiences of a particular time or event offers schools the opportunity to develop links with the wider community.

Things to consider when developing your own oral history project in school:

Find an appropriate starting point: this could arise from your History Scheme of Work, or it could relate to a special event, anniversary or festival connected with your school.

Discuss the value of oral history with the children: setting oral history in the context of other sources of historical evidence, such as photographs, books and artefacts will enable children to discover its unique characteristics.

Identify who you will interview: a starting point may be to contact people who already have connections with the school, such as friends or relatives. If you are seeking to establish links with the wider community, possible starting places might include writing a letter to your local newspaper, radio station or library. It is also worth contacting local organizations that represent particular ethnic, religious and cultural groups.

Prepare questions with the children carefully: encourage questions that are open-ended. Remind the children that their questions are a *framework* to guide their interviews and need not be followed too rigidly.

Using the tape recorder and carrying out the interview: check that the equipment works. It is useful if the children can practise interviewing in pairs or small groups beforehand to help ensure that they are confident about asking their questions and taping their interviews. Find somewhere as quiet as possible in your school for the interviews to take place. It is useful if the children tick off replies to their questions, as it will help keep their interviews on track.

After the interview: the recordings could be used alongside other sources of historical evidence to support a range of activities. For younger children these might include group or whole class discussions, sequencing activities, role-play or drawing, for example. For older children extracts of the recordings could be transcribed and analysed, used to support presentations and displays, or used as a stimulus for work in drama, art or literacy. Depending on the amount of time you have available, the recordings could also be used to develop a school archive or booklet. You could even consider depositing copies of any interviews you make with the East Midlands Oral History Archive for future generations to enjoy!

For further information on how to carry out oral history interviews of your own, you should consult the East Midlands Oral History Archive series of information sheets. These cover everything from what tape recorder you should buy, through how to conduct an interview to how to use these interviews as part of the school curriculum and family learning programmes. The East Midlands Oral History Archive will send you a set of information sheets on request. Simply ring (0116) 252 5064 or email us on emoha@le.ac.uk. Alternatively they can all be downloaded from our website at <http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/training/infosheet.html>.

Benefits of using oral accounts to support classroom learning:

History: speaking about their own past and listening to others' memories actively involves younger children in developing their understanding of the passing of time and its associated language. Sometimes it is the *way* that something is said, rather than *what* is said, that is important. Oral accounts can be used with older children to compare different points of view, to evaluate different sources of evidence, and to investigate events from different times in the past.

Literacy: oral history provides opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills. Oral accounts can be used to investigate the differences between written and spoken language and are a valuable resource for exploring different accents and dialects. For example, aspects of formal and informal language can be explored through reading transcripts and listening to their corresponding oral accounts, and then comparing these with other written sources of evidence. Carrying out their own interviews provides opportunities for children to devise and ask questions, and to listen and respond to what they have heard. Oral history can also be used as a stimulus for work in drama.

Geography: oral evidence can be used in conjunction with maps and other documents to support the study of settlements, the local area and the impact of changes in the environment on 'ordinary' people.

Religious Education: oral recordings of people from the different faith communities provide many opportunities for children to develop an understanding of the customs, practices and stories associated with them.

PSHE and Citizenship: oral accounts can be used to enhance children's understanding of a wide range of issues, from the importance of respecting the differences between people, to understanding what a democracy is and the role of the government. Oral history can also be used to enhance a sense of identity and belonging, and to promote communication skills.

ICT: children and young people can develop a range of skills in ICT through oral history projects, from research using CD ROMs or the Internet, to taping and editing their own recordings. Organising and presenting their work can also involve children in developing other skills in ICT, for example, learning how to combine sound, images and text using a multimedia software package. There are further opportunities to extend learning in ICT through developing oral history projects with family and other community groups to produce a booklet, newsletter, or even a school website.



Keep in touch with the East Midlands Oral History Archive by post, phone or email. You can find contact details at the front of this book. Alternatively check our website (<http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha>) for links to resources, more oral history extracts, useful websites, information sheets, teachers' bulletins and other information and ideas on how to use oral history in the classroom.

Bibliography/Resources

Useful websites:

[Http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha](http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha) - The East Midlands Oral History Archive website.

<http://www.discovery.com/stories/history/toys/toys.html> - the Discovery Channel's site, containing background information and the history of a number of popular toys.

<http://www.historychannel.com> - enter 'toys and games' into its search engine to find the history of popular toys, their inventors, an online quiz and timeline.

<http://www.gameskidsplay.net/> - a useful site containing details of how to play a wide variety of children's games.

http://tesco.schoolnet2000.com/work_finished_p.html/search/ - enter 'games' in the site's search to find children's descriptions of how to play a wide variety of games.

<http://www.rice.edu/projects/topics/edition11/games-section.htm> - an excellent site, which includes photographs and descriptions of children's games from around the world.

<http://www.childcare-ppin.com/ezone/cult101.htm> - a site containing examples of games played by children around the world.

<http://www.firebirdtrust.sagenet.co.uk/welcome/welcomeframe.html> - a site that contains oral accounts and memories of childhood games and toys, from the past to the present day.

<http://www.mountainvoices.org> - a site containing interviews of over 300 people who live in mountain and highland regions around the world. Their testimonies offer a personal perspective on change and development, as well as memories of childhood.

<http://www.toypost.co.uk/pages/toys.html#fives> - a site where you can order traditional toys and games online or by post.

<http://www.educate.org.uk/index.shtml> - a really useful site which supports the QCA Schemes of Work, containing weekly lesson plans, worksheets, interactive resources and assessments.

<http://schoolhistory.co.uk/> - includes recommendations and links to other useful history websites.

<http://www.toy.co.uk/museums/> - contains contact details for toy museums across the country.

Publications:

Toys: A Resource Pack, Commonwealth Institute (2001). Available from the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London, W8 6NQ.

Toys and Games (Everyday History), by Philip Steele, (2000), Franklin Watts.

Changes: Toys and Games, by Liz Gogerly, (2002), Hodder Wayland.

The Lore and Language of School Children, by Peter Opie and Iona Opie, (2001), New York Review of Books, Inc.

Museum in the Classroom: a Guide for Teachers, (1999), Campaign for Museums, www.clmg.org.uk/

Teaching History from Primary Evidence, by Keith Andreotti, (1993), Fulton Ltd.

Speaking About the Past: Oral History for 5-7 Year Olds, a Resource for Teachers, by Sandip Hazareesingh, with Penny Kenway & Kelvin Simms, (1994), Trentham Books Ltd.

Oral History in Schools, by Sallie Purkis, (1980), Colchester Oral History Society.

Talking in Class: Oral History and the National Curriculum, by Allan Redfern, (1996), Oral History Society, Essex University.

Museums:

The **Newarke Houses Museum, Leicester**, has a permanent display of toys and games from the past. For further information, contact:

Newarke Houses Museum
The Newarke
Leicester,
LE2 7BY
Tel: (0116) 247 3220
Fax: (0116) 247 0403

Belgrave Hall Museum, Leicester, features a Victorian nursery and toys, and offers sessions on the everyday life of men, women, and children in the past for Key Stage 1, and Victorian Britain for Key Stage 2. For further details, contact Education Services, on (0116) 247 3202.

Belgrave Hall Museum
Church Road
Belgrave, Leicester
LE4 5PE
Tel: (0116) 266 6590
Fax: (0116) 261 3063

From September 2003-March 2005, **Snibston Discovery Park, Leicestershire**, will be running an exhibition entitled 'Guys and Dolls', which will explore the history and cultural representation of the human form in toys. The exhibition will support the learning and teaching of the QCA Science Units 1 and 2, and Design and Technology Units 1, 2 and 4. For further information, contact:

Snibston Discovery Park
Ashby Road
Coalville
LE67 3LN
Tel: (01530) 510 851
Fax: (01530) 813 301

Harborough Museum, Leicestershire, offers sessions for local schools based on toys and games in the past, for children at Key Stages 1 and 2. For further details, contact:

Harborough Museum
Adam and Eve Street
Market Harborough
LE16 7LT
Tel: (01858) 821 085
Fax: (01858) 821 000

The National Trust Museum of Childhood

Sudbury Hall
Sudbury Ashbourne
Derby
DE6 5HT
Tel: (01283) 585305
Email: museumofchildhood@ntrust.org.uk

Coventry Toy Museum

Whitefriars Gate
Much Park Street
West Midlands
Coventry
CV21 2LT
Tel: (01203) 227560

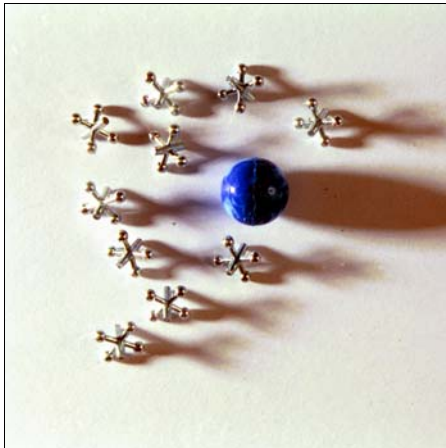


**The Museum of Childhood at
Bethnal Green**

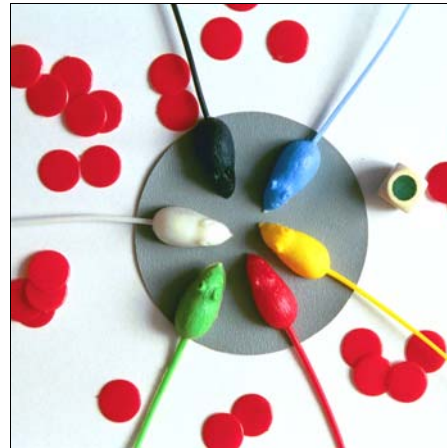
Cambridge Heath Road
London
E2 9PA
Tel: (020) 8983 5200
Fax: (020) 8983 5225
www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/nmc

Photos

On the next few pages are a series of photos that you may wish to use in classroom displays or as part of some of the exercises outlined earlier in this book.



Jacks - A popular game with many variations. See extracts 11 and 31.



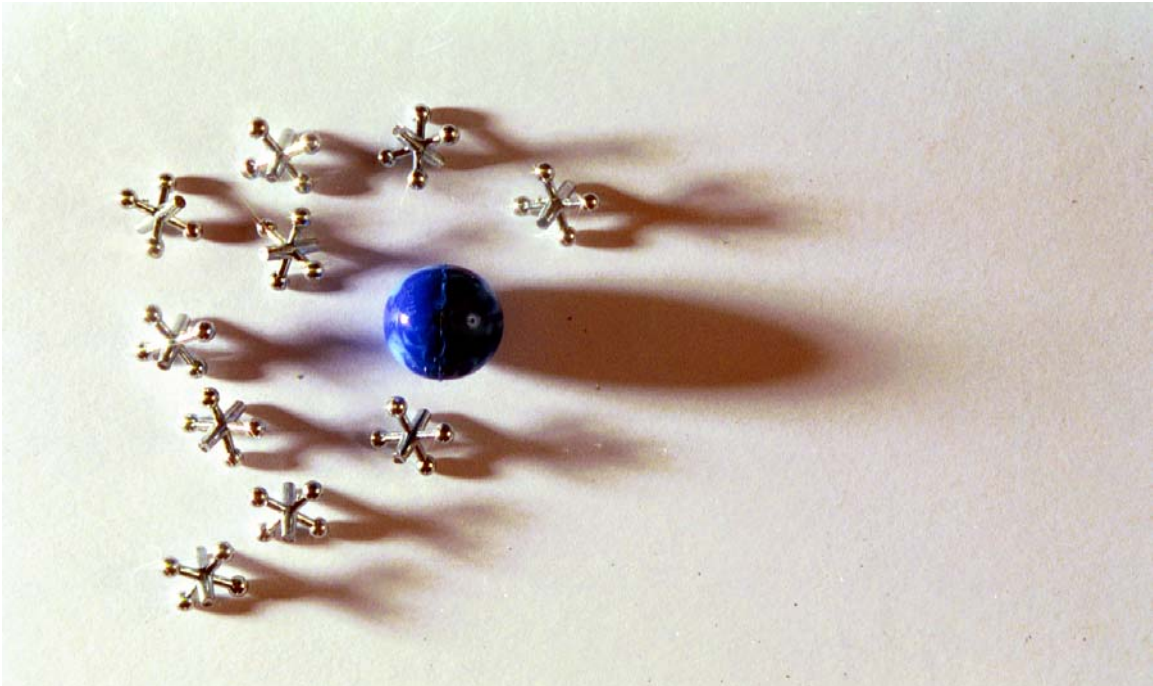
Mousie-Mousie - Still popular today, this game has entertained children for over twenty years.



Symingtons Puzzle - Produced to advertise the Symington's range of products, Symington's Puzzle was an early precursor of the Rubic Cube.

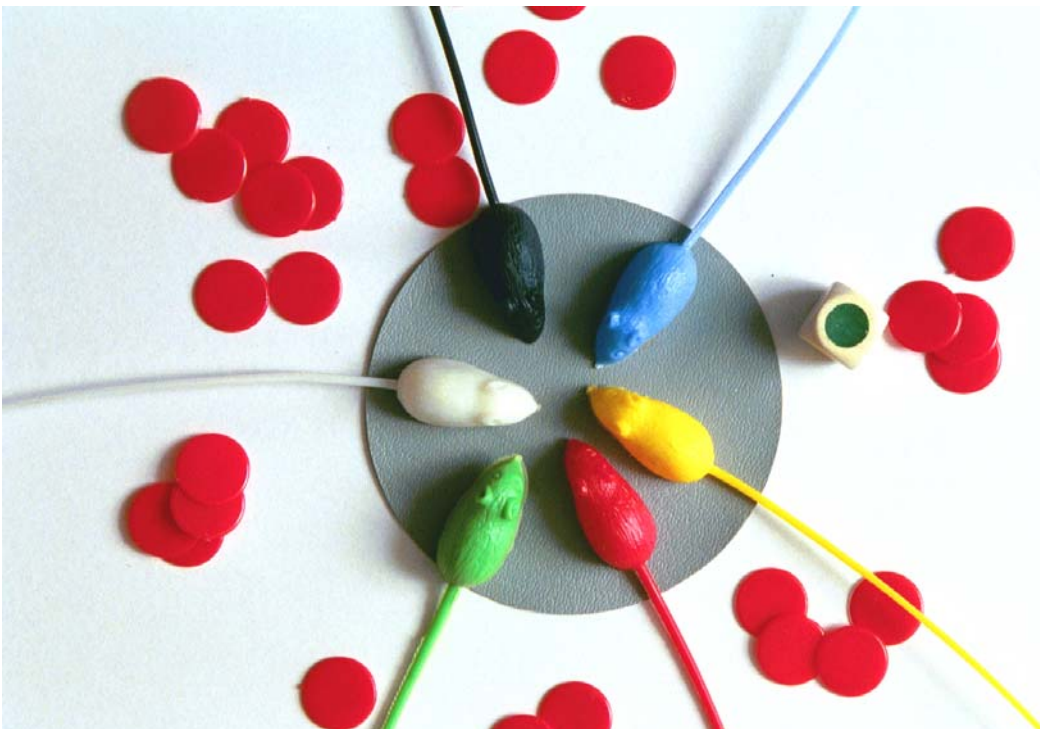


Game Consol Handset - Probably the most popular modern toy.



Jacks

Toys and Games: An Oral History



Mousie-Mousie

Toys and Games: An Oral History



Symingtons Puzzle



Game Console Handset

Toys and Games: An Oral History