

Object information

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Abacus

This small abacus would have been used by children to learn how to count, add and subtract. The abacus' design came about between 2700 and 2300 BCE in lots of parts of the world and has always been a popular way to learn calculations. These days we use computers, calculators and more recently mobile phones!

Suggested conversation starters: school days, maths, ancient Egyptians.



Acrobat toys

This is a moving, wooden acrobat toy. Toys like this became popular in Victorian times alongside the success of circus acts. It's very simple to use – just squeeze the two sticks together and watch the monkey perform tricks. Similar toys show humans performing the tricks.

Suggested conversation starters: school days, PE lessons, sports day, the circus, favourite exercises.



Beano Book 1984

The Beano is a very popular child's comic book. It was created in 1938 and is still going strong today. Favourite popular characters include Dennis the Menace, Rodger the Dodger, Minnie the Minx and the Bash Street Kids.

Suggested conversation starters: school days, comic book characters, cartoons, children's tv, collecting.



Baby's T-shirt

This little t-shirt is for a tiny baby. It shows basic maths using cute pictures to show what happens when you add 1 more to each picture.

Suggested conversation starters: new siblings, playing with dolls, learning to count.



Cup and Ball

Victorian children played with this toy. Trying to catch the ball in the cup can be frustrating and takes a lot of skill!

Suggested conversation starters: schoolyard games, homemade toys, birthday parties.



Diecast toy vehicles

Diecast vehicles like this fire engine, tow truck, black cab and delivery lorry became popular in the early twentieth century. They are called diecast due to how they were created using moulds to create detailed replicas of the original vehicles. Popular brands of models like this include Matchbox and Dinky Toys.

Suggested conversation starters: collecting toys, family cars.



Jacks

The game of Jacks has been played for thousands of years. Children in ancient Egypt played a version of Jacks called “knucklebones” with sheep toe bones! The basic concept of the game is to catch as many jacks as possible after bouncing a ball towards them. These days Jacks are usually made of metal or plastic and played with a rubber ball.

Suggested conversation starters: schoolyard games, homemade toys, birthday parties.



Jacob’s Ladder

This toy consists of wooden blocks held together by ribbons. When rotated back and forward it gives an illusion of the blocks cascading downwards. Victorian children played with this toy. It is called a Jacob’s ladder after the biblical character who dreamed of Angels moving up and down a ladder to heaven.

Suggested conversation starters: schoolyard games, homemade toys, birthday parties.



Kit Kat toy truck

Alongside Fruit Gums and Black Magic chocolate, Kit Kats were introduced by Rowntree’s of York in the 1920s and were originally called Kit Cat. It was re-branded to Kit Kat in 1935. This toy truck is advertising the brand that now belongs to Nestle.

Suggested conversation starters: confectionery manufacturers, favourite chocolates and sweets, guess the chocolate, city smelling of chocolate, Rowntree family and history, careers, first jobs.



Ludo

The board game Ludo became popular in the late 1800s and is still popular with families today. Players take turns to throw the dice and race their token around the board, hoping to be the first one to the finish.

Suggested conversation starters: family boardgames, birthday parties, Christmas and holidays.



Postman Pat Annual

Postman Pat is a popular children's character. The show was created in 1981 and follows the adventures of Pat – a friendly village postman and his cat, Jess. It was set in the fictional village of Greendale. This annual is from 1987.

Suggested conversation starters: school days, comic book characters, cartoons, children's tv, collecting.



School exercise book

This history exercise book belonged to Stephen Hull. He attended Nunthorpe Grammar School for Boys, which was built in 1920. The building is still there and forms part of Millthorpe Secondary School.

Suggested conversation starters: school days, favourite subjects.



Spinning top

Spinning tops are one of the oldest known toys played with all over the world. Before wood, they were made from clay. A wooden spinning top dated to about 2000 BCE was found in King Tutankhamun's tomb!

Suggested conversation starters: Suggested conversation starters: schoolyard games, homemade toys, birthday parties.



Tell Me game

Tell Me is a family-friendly quiz game where players spin a spinner and answer a question that starts with the letter the spinner lands on.

Suggested conversation starters: family boardgames, birthday parties, Christmas and holidays.



Teddy Bear

This cuddly National Railway Museum teddy bear is celebrating 100 years of the Flying Scotsman train that was built in Doncaster in 1923. It is a very famous train for being the first locomotive to reach 100 miles per hour! He is wearing the traditional colours, and his hat says engine driver.

Suggested conversation starters: favourite toys, railways.



Tiddlywinks

Tiddlywinks came about in Victorian times and have continued to be a fun game for children since then. Players have to flip the tiddlywinks hoping they will land on a high number or a score board, or into a pot. The winner is the player with the most points.

Suggested conversation starters: schoolyard games, homemade toys, birthday parties.



Toy cash register and pre-decimal coins

Did you play 'shops' when you were a child? This toy cash register is from the 1950s. Lots of children like to play with tills and money. The buttons on this till include pre-decimal amounts such as 2/6 and 5d.

Suggested conversation starters: first wage, pocket money, decimalisation, playing shops.

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[York Castle Museum](#)

Toyshop on the Victorian Street, Secrets of Dress.

Alongside these objects, you'll find our Collection Cards that feature images of items from our museums and galleries, with prompts, questions, and facts to spark more conversations.