

USING TOYS TO THINK ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Key concept: sustainability

Activity aims:

To build an understanding of the local, national and international context around sustainability and how children fit into this picture.

To lay foundations for key historical enquiry skills.

To introduce children to historical objects.

Context:

Using a toys loans box from a museum, and modern toys, to talk about sustainability.

Intent:

Increasingly young children are aware of both the climate crisis and the ecological crisis that we are facing. We can't pretend these aren't happening, so how can we introduce ideas around more sustainable approaches to living in a positive way for Key Stage 1 children?

As part of planning how to use a toys loans box, teachers could use one or two activities from the suggestions below to prompt interesting discussions around sustainability and help develop key concepts in the History curriculum such as:

- Changes within living memory
- Continuity and change
- Chronological narrative – how peoples' lives have shaped the nation
- Similarities and differences
- Connections between cultural, economic and social history
- Asking and answering questions

I'VE LEARNT
THAT NO ONE
IS TOO SMALL
TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.

Greta Thunberg



Key texts:

The 'Old bear' series of books by Jane Hissey

The 'Play dressing up picture books' by Charlotte Sabin

'The Toymaker' by Martin Waddell (only available used)

'Lost in the toy museum' by David Lucas

'Stanley's stick' by John Hegley



Impact:

To demonstrate the impact of these activities, children could share their knowledge with parents and carers with a 'Keeping our planet healthy' show. To demonstrate the impact of wider work using the loans box overall, talk to your local museum about the possibility of collaborating to share children's work.

Implementation: See activity ideas below

1 DOLLS HOSPITAL OR TOY WORKSHOP

Explain that because museums look after toys from the past, we often have to mend them. Mending toys used to be much more common. Toys were more costly to replace and often easier to fix. One of the longest running UK comics from the 1960s was Twinkle, which featured "Nurse Nancy" who worked in her grandfather's doll's hospital. Children now might be better able to relate to a character like Bob the Builder. Bob fixes large scale problems but could perhaps turn his hand to broken toys?

Ask children to think about why you might want to mend a toy rather than throw it away:

- A treasured family thing
- Something you can't buy any more
- To reduce the things we take to the dump
- To not waste all the materials the toy is made of

Set up a pretend play hospital for broken teddies and dolls or a workshop for mending broken toys. This can include lots of opportunities for writing.

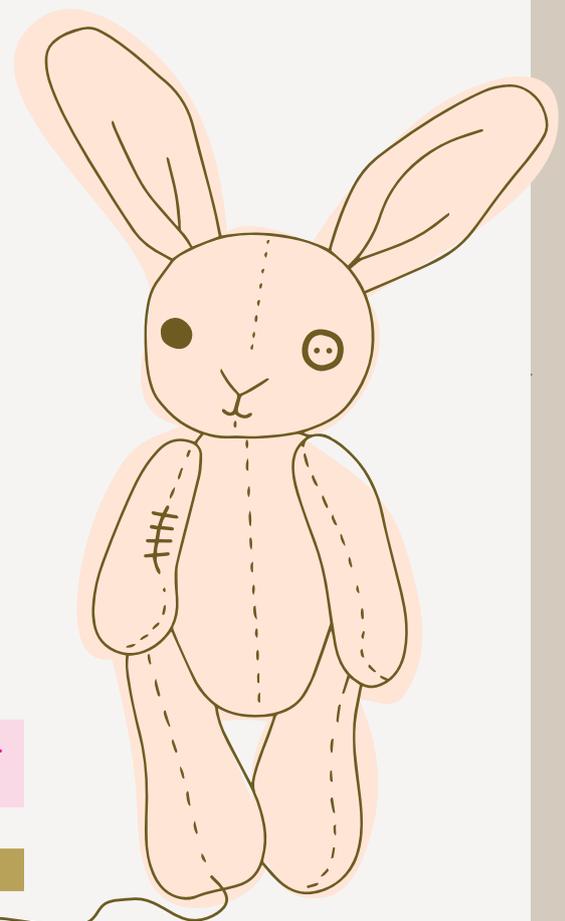
This online video about one of the few remaining Doll's Hospitals in Sydney, Australia could be useful:

widerimage.reuters.com/story/mending-dolls-teddies-and-hearts

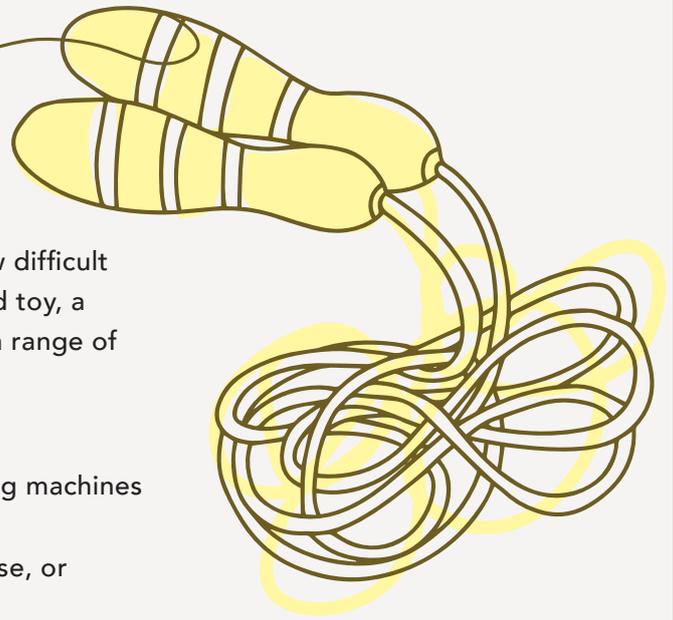
KNOWLEDGE AND PROGRESSION:

Objects from the past can be repaired and do not need to be discarded. This is one way we preserve the past.

VOCABULARY: plastic, china, materials, memories, repair, replace



2 CAN I MAKE TOYS?



Challenge children to have a go at making their own toys.

Compare traditional toys and more modern ones to see how difficult each might be to make. Include things like a teddy, a knitted toy, a skipping rope, skittles, a wooden vehicle, a drum and then a range of modern toys from action figures to an electronic toy.

- How many different parts do they have?
- Are these things that have been made in a factory using machines or something you could make using everyday tools?
- What materials are they made from: could you use those, or something that does the same job?

Have a go at making a set of skittles. This is a nice activity for pairs or small groups. Ask children to use waste materials like large pop bottles, plastic milk bottles, drinks cans or even kitchen roll inners to make the skittles. Getting the balance so the skittles stand, but fall when knocked by a tennis ball, is challenging. Younger children may find making quoits easier. Have children made toys before at home?

KNOWLEDGE AND PROGRESSION:

Toys can be made using sustainable materials.

Our grandparents often made their own toys.

VOCABULARY: wood, plastic, tin, skittles, factory, machine, sustainable

3 DO TOYS ALWAYS COST MONEY?

One game that everyone loves is dressing up. Most loans boxes will have a dressing up item such as a hat. Ask children to imagine that dressing up sets had never been invented. Could they still have fun dressing up in old clothes that are just going spare? Could they make their own hats? Explain that in the past children had fewer toys but played with other things they could find. Parents or grandparents may be willing to talk to your class about their memories of playing.

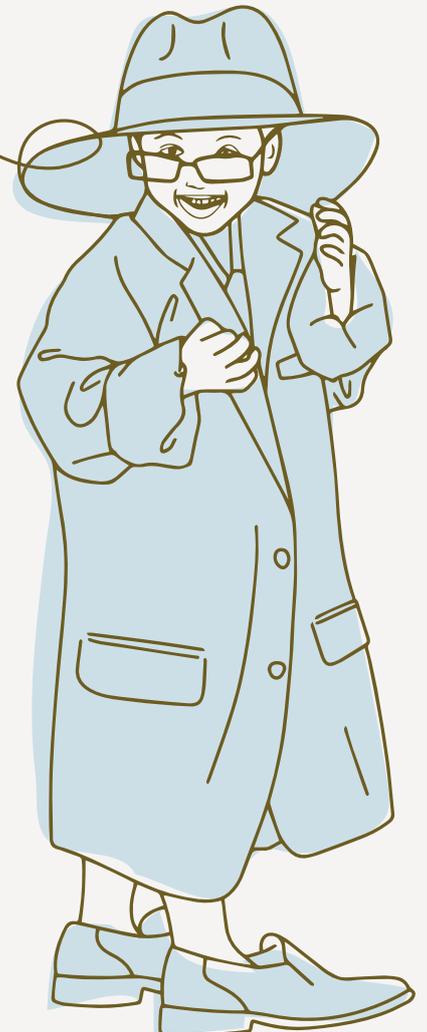
Challenge children to put on a 'no-cost' fashion show.

Older children could make posters for the show.

KNOWLEDGE AND PROGRESSION:

We can re-use different materials in order to create something new and new games to play.

VOCABULARY: past, costume, second-hand, used, re-use, imagine, pretend





4 WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH TOYS WE DONT NEED?

Most children have toys they've grown out of, or don't play with as much. Look at some traditional toys and consider which might have been suitable for babies (spoiler: not many!). Show pictures of modern toys for babies and toddlers. Can children remember things they had when they were little? Ask children what we should do with toys we've grown out of:

- Pass them onto siblings, family or friends
- Take to charity shops or car boot sales
- Find new ways to play with them
- Keep one or two as souvenirs

KNOWLEDGE AND PROGRESSION:

Rather than throw toys away, we can give them new homes.

VOCABULARY: re-use, re-home, memories, remember, past, growing-up

5 WHAT WILL TOYS OF THE FUTURE BE MADE OF?

Ask children to sort out traditional toys according to the materials they are made of. Can they name them? Talk about where the raw materials come from. Do the same with a set of modern toys. Talk about how many are plastic and that plastic is made from oil. Explain that we know using oil is bad for the planet so we are trying to do that less. Plastic is a very useful material so some people are making plastic from other things, e.g. Lego has begun making some pieces out of plastic made from sugar and some companies are making plastic from seaweed. Ask children to make a poster for their plastic of the future. What could their plastic be made from? It needs to be something that there is lots of and is part of nature, but it can be as whacky an idea as they like.

KNOWLEDGE AND PROGRESSION:

What materials are toys made from?

What can we do, in the future, to protect our environment?

VOCABULARY: past, present, future, materials, nature, plastic, sustainable

