Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Preston Park Toy Shop

Tees Valley Museums

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Tees Valley Museums

Welcome to another edition of the Talking Tees Valley Activity Pack

Each month we use objects and photos from our museums in the Tees Valley to take a closer look at the lives and stories from people in our area.

This month we look at Victorian Preston Park Toyshop Welcome to our lovely Toy Shop. This activity pack invites you to unravel the stories, history, behind this lovely shop.

Step back in time and explore the world of Victorian toys at Preston Park's toy shop! This guide will show you the history, types of toys, and what it was like to shop for toys in the Victorian era.

The Victorian era (1837-1901) was a time of big changes. Toys were very important to children and showed what people liked and valued.

The first toy shop was founded in 1760 by William Hamley in London. It was originally named "Noah's Ark" and later became known as Hamleys.

The Victorian Toy Shop Experience

Imagine walking into a small, cozy shop full of amazing toys.

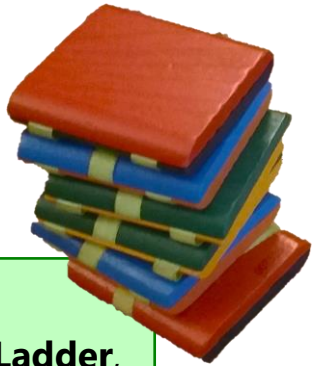
Shelves are filled with colourful toys, you can smell wood and paint and hear children excitedly talking as they look through the windows.

Keep a look out for these toys in Preston Park Museum's shop!

Rocking Horses were popular with children and sold well in Toy Shops. With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century the upper middle class became the best buyers of rocking horses.

Doll's Houses were also bought by richer families who wanted their daughters to learn about managing a home. They may have also been displays of wealth.

The richer classes could also buy toys like dolls, ships and toy theatres.

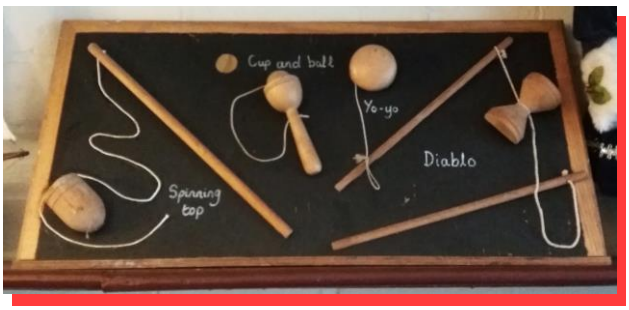


On Sundays most of these toys were cleared away and the only toy children were allowed to play with was the Noah's Ark and two-by-two animals. This was because of their Biblical connection.

Another toy with a Biblical connection was the **Jacob's Ladder**, flat wooden blocks connected by ribbons which could flip down.

Some toys were really expensive. A doll's house could cost more than families earned in a week!

Working class children in the Victorian times were sent to work from as young as 5 as chimney sweeps, street sweepers or domestic servants. These jobs took over ten hours each day, meaning there was little time to play.



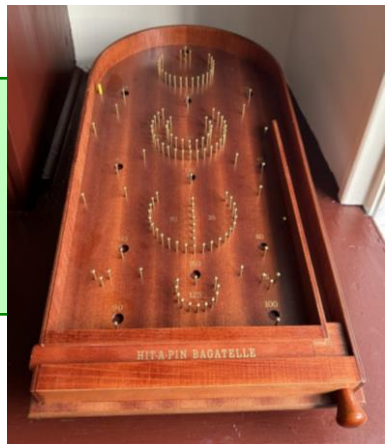
The toys they had were usually handmade, like peg dolls and skipping ropes. They also saved their pocket money to buy toys like spinning tops, skittles and cup-and-balls.

Most of these toys were made to be played outside, since working class children couldn't play inside much.

Preston Park's Toy Shop also have other types of toys like board games to encourage competition and teamwork.

Ludo, also known as 'Pachisi', first originated from India in 500 AD, with the first Ludo being introduced in England in 1896. **Snakes and Ladders** was introduced to England a few years earlier.

Some games were played in pubs like **Bagatelle**. It was similar to billiards or pinball, with the aim to get the ball in one of the holes and winning points depending on which one.



Questions to Ask:

How do the toys in this Victorian shop differ from the toys you play with today?

Which Victorian toy would you most like to play with and why?

Why do you think some toys, like rocking horses and dolls, have remained popular for so long?

How do you think a child's play experience in Victorian times might have been different based on their family's wealth?

The Victorian toy shop at Preston Park offers a unique glimpse into the childhood experiences of the past. As you explore, think about how things have changed from cloth dolls to barbies, from abacus to today's toys and games!

Games to Play – At Home or at Preston Park!

Victorian Toy Shop Math

Help the shopkeeper solve these problems:

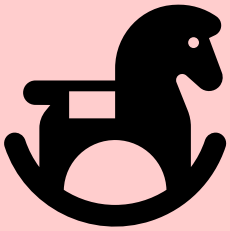
1. If a wooden top costs 2 pence and a bag of marbles costs 5 pence, how much would it cost to buy 3 tops and 2 bags of marbles?
2. A rocking horse costs 1 pound and 10 shillings. If you have 2 pounds, how much change would you get?

Remember: In Victorian times, there were 12 pence in a shilling, and 20 shillings in a pound!

Preston Park Toy Shop Treasure Hunt

Next time you visit Preston Park, see if you can spot these Victorian toys in the museum. Tick them off as you find them!

- [ ] Rocking Horse
- [ ] Porcelain Doll
- [ ] Toy Soldiers
- [ ] Spinning Top
- [ ] Noah's Ark Set
- [ ] Doll's House



Victorian Toy Shop Role Play

With your friends or family, act out a scene in a Victorian toy shop. Here are some character ideas:

- Shopkeeper
- Rich child
- Poor child
- Toy maker
- Parent

What toys would each character be interested in? How would they interact?

We hope you enjoyed this journey back in time to a Victorian toy shop in Preston Park! Remember, many of these toys can still be fun today. Why not try making some of your own Victorian-style toys at home?

Can You Draw Your Own Victorian Toy?

Imagine you're a Victorian toy maker. Draw and colour your own toy in the space below. Remember, there were no electronics back then!

What is your toy called? _____

How do you play with it? _____

All images used in this pack are courtesy of Preston Park Museum and Grounds.

You can find all our Talking Tees Valley packs through the Tees Valley Museums website under 'Latest News' or here: https://teesvalleymuseums.org/news/

If you would like to share your stories or contact us about the packs please e-mail teesvalleymuseums@stockton.gov.uk