Amazing Toys of Long Ago

Bennington Museum is looking forward to presenting the Amazing Toys of Long Ago program to your class! You may wish to make connections in your classroom to the things your students experience during the program. Below are just a few ideas for pre- and post-visit activities that you could do with your class. If you have a great activity idea and would like to share it with us, please contact Deana Mallory at dmallory@benningtonmuseum.org or call (802) 447-1571.

Pre-Program Activities

Rules
If your class will be visiting the museum, talk about the rules they might be expected to follow when they get there. We will go over these with them, of course, but they could make predictions about what rules we will ask them to follow and why, based on what they expect to see and do while they are at the museum.

Time Travel
The toys that your students will learn about and play with during this program represent toys from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Help your students develop a concept of the past by creating time lines, starting with their own lives, then working further into the past. When were their parents young children? Their grandparents? Their great-great grandparents? Add the invention of familiar items like televisions and automobiles to help students understand changes in technology over time.

Make Predictions
Have your students make predictions about what kinds of toys they will see during the program. How do they think toys from long ago will differ from or be similar to the toys they use today? Keep a list of their predictions to look back on after the program.

Show and Tell
Have each students bring in a favorite toy to share with the class. Where and when did they get the toy? What makes it a favorite? Encourage them to think about how the toy was made, what materials it is made from, whether or not such a toy would have existed when their parents or grandparents were children, etc. Do they think that children of the future will play with similar toys?
Post-Program Activities

Amazing Toys Worksheet
Have students complete the “Amazing Toys of Long Ago” worksheet to compare and contrast toys from long ago, now, and imaginary toys from the future.

Interview
Have students interview a parent or other family member about his or her favorite toys as a child. If possible, they could interview several people from the same generation, looking for similarities, and/or people from different generations (grandparents, older neighbors) looking for changes in toys over time.

Research
Using the Internet, library, and other resources, students can conduct research on the history of a particular kind of toy – dolls, toy cars, even video games. Have the students present their finding to the class, or combine the reports to create a class book on the history of toys.

Making Toys of Long Ago
Use the attached instructions to make thaumatropes. Look on the Internet for other simple toys that you can make with your students.
Amazing Toys of Long Ago

My favorite toy from long ago was...

My favorite toy from now is...

A new toy in the future might be...
Easy Thaumatrope

The easiest way to make your own thaumatrope is to start with a rectangular piece of cardstock (a blank white index card is perfect).

Fold the rectangle in half, then unfold it again.

Draw a part of a picture on the bottom half of the rectangle – an empty fish bowl, for example.

Draw the rest of the picture on the top half of the rectangle – the fish, for example.

Refold the rectangle, and use a little glue to seal it shut.

Use a hole puncher to put a hole on each side of the card. Try to make your holes even with each other.

Tie a bit of string through each of the holes.

Twist and untwist the strings in your fingers to make the card spin. When you do, you will see the whole picture – the fish in the bowl!

How does it work?

One theory, called “persistence of vision,” states that the eye holds onto an image for a fraction of a second after the image has passed. When images pass in rapid succession, the effect is a “blending” of the two images. However, scientists believe it’s really more complicated than that. Our brains have the job of making sense of the information they receive from our eyes. Perhaps our brains understand that the fish and bowl are supposed to be together, and so that’s the way we see them!