

Lesson Plan: Toys & Games of the Past

K-8th



Lesson Summary

Toys and games have been part of every civilization throughout history. However, they have not always been used primarily in childhood. The use of toys and games has shifted over time. By using this lesson plan, you and your students will be able to learn how the toys and games people play with reflect the times in which they live and how their use developed over time.

Learning Objectives

Children will learn about the history of toys, why play is important, and how toys and games have changed over time as the definition of childhood changed.

- Learn about the history of toys.
- Make and play games with old-fashioned toys.

Background Information/Historical Context (For staff/teachers)

Toys and games have been a part of every civilization. Throughout history, they have provided historians, anthropologists, and sociologists with insight into ancient civilizations. They can also document important moments throughout history. Please see the resource file for a historic background on the use of toys and games in the past.

Preparing the Lesson

- Read the background information.
 - See Resource File 1 – A History of Play
 - See Resource File 3 – Select Toy Histories
- Print or download the vocabulary page.
 - See Resource File 2 – Related Vocabulary
- Find an outdoor area to play some of the more active games including marbles and hoops and sticks. Baleros, Jacob's Ladders, and Thaumatrope can be played and made indoors at tables.
- Print or download instructions and related images for the activities and games you choose to play.
- Gather the materials needed.

Teacher Presentation

- Summarize the history of play.
 - See Resource File 1 – A History of Play
- Discuss why play is important in childhood.
- Introduce the related vocabulary list.
 - See Resource File 2 – Related Vocabulary
- Explain that these toys & games were played by New Mexican children in the 1800s.
- Play the hands-on activities which will reinforce learning objectives.

Materials Needed:

- Hoops and sticks
- Marbles
- Baleros
- Pencils
- Colored pencils or markers (optional)
- Paper towels
- Water
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- String or rubberbands
- Jacob's Ladders
- Terracotta clay
- Cardstock or cardboard
- Zoetropes

Essential Questions to Ask

- When were toys and games invented?
- What kinds of toys and games were played over a century ago?
- Why is play important?

Activities and Games

Game: Hoop & Stick, Game of Graces

Wooden hoops were often used in the games of early settler children. The town cooper—barrel maker—often gave children the old barrel hoops to use for their games. Wheelwrights and blacksmiths provided metal hoops from tires.

Please see the resource files for detailed instructions on playing with hoops and sticks.

Activity: Marbles

Marble games were popular with people of all ages. In the 1800s, almost every child owned a bag of favorite marbles for playing games in the schoolyard. Marbles have interesting names such as “cat’s eyes,” “swirls,” “onionskins,” and “clouds.”

Please see the resource files for detailed instructions on playing with marbles.

Game: Baleros (Cup & Ball Game)

This game is a very popular early toy. The object is to swing the ball into the cup attached to a string.

Please see the resource files for detailed instructions on playing with baleros.

Game: Jacob's Ladders

Jacob's Ladders were very popular in the 1800s. The toy looks and moves like a person descending a ladder.

Please see the resource files for detailed instructions on playing with Jacob's Ladders.

Activity: Zoetropes & Thaumatrope

These were optical illusion toys. Though different, both toys made pictures look like they were moving!

Please see the resource files for detailed instructions on playing with zoetropes & thaumatropes.

New Mexico State Standards:

Please see Resource File 5 for a list of benchmarks and standards for this lesson.

Resources/Citations:

Please see Resource File 6 for a list of resources and citations for the background information.

Questions & Comments

We would love to hear from you and your students. Let us know about your successful game play! Send us photos of you and your students playing some of your favorite toys and games from this lesson. Please contact Instructional Coordinator, Alexandra McKinney, with questions or comments at alexandra.mckinney@state.nm.us.