33 Amazing Toy Facts - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.216)

List Show
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Hi, I'm John Green, welcome to my salon, this is Mental_Floss on YouTube and did you know that when Twister first came out in 1966 critics denounced the game as "sex in a box"? Boy, with criticism like that, its a wonder that it ever caught on. Teenagers around America were like "I can get sex in a box? Anyway, that's the first of many facts about toys that I'm gonna share with you today.

(Intro)

While 30-year old Eleanor Abbott was recovering from polio she kept herself busy by inventing something that would benefit bedridden kids for decades : Candyland.

By the way, in case you can't remember, Candyland involves absolutely no skill, which means that your four year old can literally beat you at it, it's completely unfair, which is why I only play Risk with four year olds.

In addition to every other amazing thing he ever did, in 1996 Mister Rogers poured the wax that made the 100 billionth Crayola Crayon.

Alright, a few toy box names you probably didn't know :

The original Hungry Hungry Hippos were named Happy, Henry, Harry, and Homer. It's rumored that Homer is blind, but some people just think that's folklore.

The Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots were Rocker and Blue bomber.

And if you wanna call someone a G.I. Joe by his full name you should call him Government Issue Joe, but in a casual setting, he prefers just Joe.

Koosh balls were named for the sound they make when they hit your hand.

And the Slinky is one of two toys to achieve official state toy status (it presides over Pennsylvania,) while the Teddy Bear is the official state toy of Mississippi.

Legend has it that in 1902 Teddy Roosevelt was on a hunting expedition in Mississippi when he came across a helpless bear and refused to shoot it, saying that it would be "unsportsmanlike". The media grabbed onto the story and a New York toy company started calling their stuffed toy bears "Teddys". It's a lovely story but we all know it's not true because Teddy Roosevelt never saw an animal he didn't kill.

Anyway, toy companies failed to duplicate the success of Roosevelt's "Teddy Bear" with William Howard Taft's "Billy Possum", and yes, that is a true story.

In 1999 a man in Minnesota was sentenced to a year and a half in prison for selling counterfeit Beanie Babies. He also had to pay $150,000 for a conspiracy to commit mail fraud. I don't know if you guys remember this from the 90's but we took our Beanie Babies very seriously.

That's why we keep Meredith's Beanie Baby meerkat (or the Mercat as we call it) in a jar.

Before they took off as stuffed animals, Care Bears were made as merely illustrations whipped up to sell American Greeting products.

And now you're a real, live, plastic toy, Sunshine Bear.

The somewhat terrifying Teddy Ruxpin was designed by a Disney engineer who used the same technology that you see in the animatronics at Disneyland which is weird because the Country Bears aren't at all terrifying. Hall of Presidents, on the other hand, I do see it.

If you have the urge to adopt a Cabbage Patch Doll, you should head to Babyland Hospital in Cleveland, Georgia. It's situated on about 650 acres of land where Mother Cabbage gives birth to babies every hour beneath the magic crystal tree, which is pollinated by a bee hybrid called bunny bees- Meredith, what am even talking about.

As a child I was terrified of the Cabbage Patch Kids, and with good reason. Like, the Snack Time Cabbage Patch Kids had mechanical jaws so they could chew. Surprisingly enough this proved to be a disaster and Mattel eventually had to offer refunds after complaints that the dolls had chewed on and pulled out kids' hair.

Let's move on to toys from a simpler time. The Radio Flyer Wagon, it's a strange name for such a straightforward toy, but there's a reason for it. It's creator, Antonio Pasin felt that humans flying and radio were two of our greatest achievements, with our third greatest achievement being wagons. Now, of course if Antonio Pasin were inventing the Radio Flyer Wagon he would call it the IPhone Chipotle wagon.

The first toy ever to be advertised on television was Mr. Potato Head. He was also the first toy to feature real produce. That's right, the original Mr. Potato Head was actually a potato. Kids jammed eyes, ears, and accessories into real vegetables, like his buddies included Katie Carrot, Pete the Pepper, and Cookie Cucumber. Why do they all get names but Mr. Potato Head doesn't?

By the way, Mr. Potato Head is also the official travel ambassador for Rhode Island where Hasbro is headquartered ... and where nothing else happens.

We have Captain Kangaroo to thank for the success of Play-Doh. When it was just a fledgling company with no advertising budget, inventor Joe McVicker talked Captain Kangaroo into featuring it on the show. McVicker also offered Captain Kangaroo a portion of sales for promoting it to the kids, so naturally Captain Kangaroo started promoting it three times a week.

Also, before it was eaten by kids in classrooms everywhere, Play-Doh was just,like, wall paper cleaner. People wishing to clean the soot and dirt from their patterned walls would just roll the ball of goop across the surface and it only came in off white, although the flavor was still delicious.

In 2000, Fisher Price attempted to update the classic Chatter Telephone Pull toy for toddlers by adding push buttons and lights to resemble more modern phones. But nostalgic customers were outraged and the rotary dial was back the next year.

Off topic, but can you imagine if that happened with, like, real phones? Like if we all went to the Apple store and complained because our new iPhones are so nice and they don't have rotary dials?

On to the Magic 8 Ball. So, the die that holds the mysterious answers to all of our questions is called an icosahedron