27 Fun Facts About Fun - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep.53)

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Hi I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon.

I have a bit of a cold today, so I'm coming to you with my husky voice.

1. Anyway, did you know that mini golf was invented in Victorian England? Apparently, women weren't supposed to raise a club above their shoulder on a back swing. And now we're all doomed to watch fictional, cheesy mini golf dates in romantic comedies.

And that's the first of many facts about fun that I'm going to share with you today in this video presented by Geico. No, I'm not talking about the band Fun, by the way. You guys have already heard that song enough. I'm talking about, like, games, theme parks, Harry Potter, we've got you covered.

[intro]

2. Speaking of mini golf, in the 1950s, dyed goat hair was used for mini golf putting greens instead of grass. How is that easier than just using grass?

3. Also, lest you think that mini golf isn't serious business, there is a literal World Mini golf Sport Federation. It's headquartered in Sweden, naturally, and the Federation handles all official mini golf tournaments and competitions. I wonder if they also have regulations for, like, the size of the clown's mouth or the speed of the windmill… Regardless, I don't like mini golf. Meredith, I thought this video was supposed to be about fun.

4. But you know what is fun? Lincoln Logs. What's that? They aren't named for Abraham Lincoln? Lincoln Logs were created by John Lloyd Wright, who was the son of America's most famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. And they weren't named for Abraham Lincoln. Frank's name before his parents broke up was Frank Lincoln Wright, so that's probably where the "Lincoln" comes from. The design for Lincoln Logs was inspired by an earthquake proof hotel in Tokyo. And after he sold the idea for $800, John Lloyd Wright hoped that lightning would strike twice, so he built another set of building blocks: Wright Blocks. Which did not take off. I guess they really should've been called Wrong Blocks. Anybody? Anyone? No?

5. Speaking of building toys, the idea for K'Nex came to Joel Glickman while he was playing with drinking straws at a wedding.

6. And the name LEGO comes from the Danish words LEg & GOdt, which together mean "play well." It was only later that the company learned that in Latin, Lego means "I put together."

7. Moving onto roller coasters… the first ones were Russian ice coasters in the 17th century. These were built for Catherine the Great behind her palace. They were 5-stories-high and built at a ridiculously steep 50 degrees. Now I can't get halfway through Space Mountain without screaming, "Stop the rollercoaster, it's an emergency!" but these Russian ice coasters were very popular and they were then exported to France, where they were known as "Russian Mountains."

8. In 1884, one of the first roller coasters was built on Coney Island. It was created by La Marcus Thompson who's known today as the "Father of the Gravity Ride." It wasn't actually that thrilling. It was a slightly sloped ride that went 6 miles an hour, which sounds perfect to me. But it was really lucrative—he made the equivalent of $31,000 in 3 weeks.

9. Now today's roller coasters may seem quite dangerous, but in fact, a 2001 study done by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions found that you're more likely to be injured while using a folding lawn chair then while riding a roller coaster. I don't care, I'm still not doing it.

10. On the topic of Coney Island, when Sigmund Freud and his protégé Carl Jung visited the United States, Freud declared that Coney Island was the only part of America that interested him. And Beyoncé once filmed a music video there, which means that both the 20th century's most important psychologist and human history's most important individual dug Coney Island. That ain't bad.

11. Beyoncé isn't the only celebrity who has spent time at Coney Island. Cary Grant used to be a stilt walker there. He learned the skill while touring with a vaudeville group in England.

12. Now let's move on to kickball. The original kickball had some crazy rules, including: 30 players could play at once. There was no pitcher! People just placed the ball and kicked it. And people stood 20 feet away from home plate, and if the ball didn't reach them, the kicker was automatically out. And the craziest original kickball rule is that there was only one base! It was like cricket. I think. I don't actually know the rules of cricket. And 14 people could be on that one base at the same time. But if they didn't run home by the time the 15th person batted, they were all out.

13. In 1950, the Etch-a-Sketch was invented in France and it was originally called the Telecran and was operated by joystick but then ten years later, Henry Winzeler, of the Ohio Art Toy Company, licensed it for American use and among Winzeler's innovations was replacing the joystick with two white knobs to make the Etch-a-Sketch look more like a hot new adult toy: television.

14. Let's move on to a fun BOOK: Harry Potter. When JK Rowling was trying to come up with the name for Quidditch, she listed out 5 pages of words that started with Q until she found one that she really liked.

15. Of course, in the Harry Potter world, King's Cross station is where students catch the train to Hogwarts, but that station has special meaning to JK Rowling -- her parents met there. JUST LIKE HARRY AND RON. So fanfiction writers, you know, do your thing.

16. Rowling recently admitted that she kind of wishes that Harry and Hermione had ended up together, but she's admitted to some less controversial mistakes as well. Snowy owls, for instance, do not hoot or make conversational sounds the way they do in the book.

17. And now that you've learned that JK Rowling lied about birds, you may want to skip the Wizarding World of Harry Potter and head to a different amusement park, like, I don't know, Tivoli Gardens in Denmark. It's one of the oldest operating amusement parks in the world. It opened in 1843 and reportedly inspired Walt Disney when he was thinking about Disneyland. The first proprietor of Tivoli Gardens, Georg Carstensen, sold the idea to the king by saying, "When the people are amusing themselves, they do not think about politics."

18. Santa Claus Land in the town of Santa Claus, Indiana might be the first-ever theme park. Spoiler alert, the theme is robots. No, I'm just kidding, it's Santa. Anyway, Santa Claus land is widely considered to be the first park that had some kind of recurring motif instead of just a random jumble of rides and attractions.

19. Onto a few toys that Santa often brings. The Super Soaker, invented by NASA engineer Lonnie Johnson, was originally called "the Power Drencher."

20. Another fun name is Crayola, which means "oily chalk" in

French. According to the Crayola company, the average kid wears out over 700 crayons by their 10th birthday, which actually seems kind of low to me because I recently went out to dinner with my family and we broke at least 100 crayons just in an hour.

21. The real name of Monopoly mascot Rich Uncle Pennybags is Milburn Pennybags. Also, one time a big Monopoly marathon in Pittsburgh ran out of Monopoly money, so Parker Brothers filled an armored car with game money and rushed it over. That's a great heist movie waiting to happen, like, the stakes get higher and higher and higher and oh, Monopoly money.

22. Mark Twain invented a board game. It was like an early, more boring version of Trivial Pursuit called "Mark Twain's Memory Builder: A Game for Acquiring and Retaining All Sorts of Facts and Dates." Nice try, Mark, but I think I'm gonna stick to Mouse Trap. I don't understand why novelists think they can do things besides write novels. What, do you think you're full of facts so you can just host some trivia show?

23. So real life people who have been G.I. Joe figurines: Teddy Roosevelt, Buzz Aldrin, Rowdy Roddy Piper, and football player "Refrigerator" Perry.

24. During the 14th century, a hula hooping craze swept England and doctors blamed the fad for increasing rates of dislocated backs and heart attacks. So don't hula hoop.

25. And going back even earlier in time, a Greek vase from 500 BCE shows a kid playing with a yo-yo.

26. And now we return to my salon so that I can tell you that THIS is a Cozy Coupe. Almost 500,000 of these are sold every year. In fact in 2008, they were the best selling car in America by a wide margin. I know you want me to get into it. I'm gonna try.

Could you get into this Mark? Ooh. Oh boy. Gotta get on the other side of the steering wheel there. You know, it's really the, the, it's the roof. Huh! Ooh. Ah. Haaa. Hooo. Ah.

27. The first one of these was sold in 1979, making the car nearly 35 years old. The inventor Jim Mariol came up with the idea while wheeling around his office in a desk chair. I don't understand why he couldn't have just invented a desk chair. I'm never gonna get out of this thing.

Thanks for watching Mental Floss here on YouTube which is made with the help of all these nice people and again presented by our friends at Geico.

Every week I endeavor to answer one of your mind-blowing questions. This week's question comes from Melissa Benson who asks "When was bubble gum invented?" Well, Melissa, even though chewing gum has existed for thousands of years, bubble gum was technically invented in 1906 for the Fleer Company, you know, the baseball card people. But it wasn't actually sold until the formula was perfected in 1928. That became Dubble Bubble.

If you want to leave a mind-blowing question, you can do so in comments. Thanks again for watching and don't forget to be awesome.

[endscreen]

Henry gets into this thing so effortlessly. Huh! Good party.