

## GAMES

### Activities based on the webpages of the British Library

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/playground/browsegames.html>

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/playground/kidszone.html>

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/playground/browseadultview.html#cm=Videos&gm=Playing&id=120547&id2=120920>

### Marbles

This footage was filmed in London in 1957 and shows children playing the popular game of marbles. Roud writes that in recent years marbles have lost their hold on playgrounds, largely due to concerns that children will fight over them and lose them, and also that they may encourage a form of gambling. However, this is not to say the game has disappeared altogether and marbles may still appear seasonally on playgrounds across the country.

The game of marbles has many different variations, rules and aims. According to the Roud, the best known game is called 'Ringy' or 'Ring Taw'. To play, children would draw a circle and each place their marbles inside the ring. The aim was then for each player to attempt to drive out as many marbles from the ring as possible. Once the player failed to hit any marbles, their marble must stay in the ring and it is the next player's turn. In this particular film we see a variation of this game with the boys firing at a line, instead of a ring of marbles. If they succeed in knocking a marble so that it rolls back down towards it is theirs to keep.

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/playground/browseadultview.html#cm=Videos&gm=Playing&id=120547&id2=121159>

### Whip and tops

This recording was made by Iona Opie in Wythenshawe, Manchester, in 1976, and records an interview with a young girl comparing the games she and her mother played as children. The Opies suggest that the game of tops can be traced back to Egypt c.1250, although these tops would have been spun rather than whipped. From this developed whipping tops which were engraved with grooves so that they could be hit, often with pieces of leather. The game of tops was traditionally seen as a boys' game, before whip and tops became an accepted game for girls. Roud suggests 'there is a noticeable difference in tone between women's and men's memories of tops. [...] Women often focus on what might be called 'the gentle art' of top-spinning; they record colouring the tops with chalk or pieces of paper to make pretty patterns, and the pleasures of watching tops spinning. Men, on the other hand, remember the competitive games, and the danger to life and limb involved.' The game demanded much skill and moves included picking up a spinning top with the palm of one's hand; pushing small items out of a circle with the top; knocking other tops down and racing tops against each other.

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### Girls hula

This was filmed in May 2010 in the project's London school playground. Hula hoops are popular with girls throughout primary school (aged 5-11) but the skills are learnt and most enthusiastically demonstrated quite early, mainly between the ages of five and seven. Here, one girl, wearing a Hello Kitty dress, advances across the playground with the hoop around her right ankle, hopping as it passes under her left foot. Other girls show the more usual practice of rotating the hips to keep the hoop in play for as long as possible, some favouring speed, others a slower rhythm with a greater

apparent risk of the hoop dropping to the ground.

## Conkers

This footage was captured in London in 1957. We see the boys first collecting their conkers and then beginning a game. Roud estimates the modern game of conkers to be one hundred and sixty years old, although the game itself is derived from much earlier 'Conquerors' games based on natural objects being hit or squeezed against each other, for example snail shells or walnut shells. Roud suggests that the earliest reference to using horse chestnut conkers for this sort of game can be found in R. Tucker's *Athenaeum* in January 1899 in which he recalls playing 'Conquerors' as a schoolboy on the Isle of Wight in 1899. Although there are many variants of the game, its most simple form involves one player holding his conker still, at arms length, as it hangs from a piece of string. His opponent must then attempt to strike the conker with the intention of breaking it. The game continues until one of the player's conkers is broken and the striker wins.

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## Playing with things

Toys and everyday found objects have swept through playgrounds for centuries, temporarily filling the pockets of children before losing their place to ever-newer trends. Over the years, the playground has borne witness to all kinds of crazes, including tops and hoops; jacks; fivestones; cigarette cards; skip balls; conkers; Spice Girl trading cards; pokemon; yo-yos; pogs; Match Attax cards and Bakugan figures to name but a few. Such fads are central to children's play, and these items often take hold in playgrounds for months at a time. As one girl put it, these crazes spread like 'butter on toast.' Not all items are one-hit-wonders, however, and many may be revived, such as marbles or trading cards in their various incarnations. Non-commercial, mundane objects are equally important to children's play: thanks to the inexhaustible creativity of children's minds, a heap of grass cuttings or a muddy puddle can capture the imagination just as much as a Barbie or warrior figure.

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/playground/browseadultview.html#cm=Videos&gm=Playing&id=120547&id2=120920>

### 1. Complete the table

Name of game	Actions/activities in the game	Equipment /accessories	Number of players	Aim of game
marbles				
whips and tops				
hula				

conkers				

2. Write 5 kinds of things (mentioned in the texts) that children play with or collect.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

3. Answer **True** or **False**

a) One the reasons for a recent smaller popularity of marbles is their supposed bad influence on children. **T/F**

b) The game of tops was first seen as a girls' game. **T/F**

c) The winner of the game in conkers is the one who breaks the opponent's conker. **T/F**

d) One-hit-wonder is a person/activity/ thing popular for a long time. **T/F**

**4. Writing**

Choose 1 game which you used to play as a child and answer the questions below.

- 1. Name of the game:
- 2. Where and how did you learn it?
- 3. How do you play it? (in not more than 5 sentences)
- 4. Where do you play it?
- 5. Who do you play it with?
- 6. Why do children like the game?

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The British Library, [online], [dostęp 30 września 2013], dostępny w Internecie:  
<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/playground/browseadultview.html#cm=Videos&gm=Playing&id=120547&id2=120920>

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