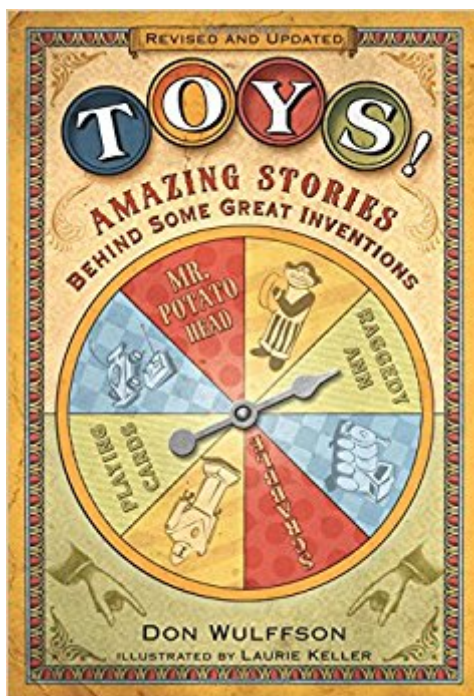


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# Toys!: Amazing Stories Behind Some Great Inventions



## Synopsis

A fresh, intriguing look at the stories behind great toy inventions, by Don Wulffson and illustrated by Laurie Keller. "Originally, Play-Doh only came in white. There's a good reason for this. You see, Play-Doh didn't start out as a toy. It started out as a product for cleaning wallpaper." Have you ever wondered who invented Lego, Mr. Potato Head, or toy trains? In *Toys!* are the fascinating stories behind these toy inventions and many others. Learn why the see-saw was popular with the Romans, how the Slinky was used during the Vietnam War, and the reason Raggedy Ann has a red heart on her chest that says "I love you." From dolls and checkers to pinball and the modern video game, there's a wide selection here for boys and girls alike. With humor and wit, this intriguing book serves up slices of cultural history that will inspire young readers to start thinking up their own toy inventions.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Grade 4-8-Wulffson shares the stories behind classic and commercial toy inventions such as Legos, Mr. Potato Head, Raggedy Ann, toy soldiers, Twister, checkers, and remote control cars. Readers will discover that some of the most popular creations were the products of experiments gone awry, thus providing a lesson in persistence, surprise outcomes, and creative thinking. Several pages of history are provided for each plaything, followed by bulleted trivia, such as "The ingredient that gives Play-Doh its distinctive aroma is vanilla." Keller's clever black-and-white cartoons add humor to the

already-engaging text. A light read or a lively report source on inventions. Victoria Kidd, Gwinnett County Public Library, Lawrenceville, GA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Wulffson follows up *The Kid Who Invented the Popsicle* (1997) with the sometimes quirky tales behind more than two dozen novelties, gadgets and games, from playing cards and wind-up toys to Play-Doh. Some (tops, seesaws) have long histories, some (whoopee cushions) only seem to have been around forever, and some (Trivial Pursuit) are of recent vintage. The author brushes in their origins and variations with broad strokes, livening the picture further with factoids at each chapter's end, and Keller's gnomic, black-and-white cartoon figures lighten the tone further by cracking wise on the side. The generalizations may sometimes shade over into oversimplifications (There is even an Asian religion based on kite flying), and there is nothing about Pokémon or other current crazes, but these accounts of the origins of super balls, Raggedy Ann, Legos, Twister, Pong and the like will give middle graders new insight into their parents' misspent youths--and a bibliography and a list of Web sites will give readers who want all the details a head start. (Nonfiction. 9-11) -- Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

This is a pretty good way to get kids interested in science and explain how inventions evolve, as well as just to get their interest. Each little chapter (each on a different invention or type of invention) runs through things in chronological order, then adds some trivia in a bulleted list at the end. I will say that while lists it as appropriate for grades 3-7, I would agree with the blurbs that place it starting more at the 4th grade level. Third grade students could probably understand it with some support and would really enjoy pieces of it, but a lot of the vocabulary is more appropriate for many 4th or 5th/6th grade levels. I actually read excerpts to my 2nd/3rd grade students and they really enjoyed it, but I had to change some words and skip some pieces to help them understand.

I had to read a non-fiction book for school due on 1/19/16 and was assigned on 11/23/15 . So I am a huge procrastinator and I waited until 3 days before the due date. I finished it easily and it was very interesting so I recommend this book.

Here is a book that can be read and enjoyed by "children of all ages." Although I purchased it when it first appeared (in 2000) and have since read it with grandchildren ranging in age from two to twelve, I never gave much thought to reviewing it until recently when one of the grandchildren borrowed it to read to a friend who was staying overnight. I'm told that the friend later purchased a

copy and also shares it with friends. I guess Emanuel Rosen and Seth Godin (as well as countless others) would characterize this as an example of BUZZ. The concept for this book, written by Don Wulffson, is simple...and brilliant: Briefly explain the origin of several of the most popular toys. They include The Slinky, Lego, Mr. Potato Head, Silly Putty, toy soldiers, Checkers, Play-Doh, and kites. Did you already know that "Slinky's most recent accomplishment was in outer space. Bunches have gone aboard space shuttles. The purpose: to test the effects of zero gravity on springs." "Playing with a four-sided top called a dreidel is a Hanukkah tradition. Each side has a Hebrew letter, and the letter on which the dreidel falls determines of the player wins the prize." "Ironically, after becoming a popular toy, many practical uses have been found for Silly Putty. Mechanics use it to clean equipment, dry cleaners to remove lint, and zookeepers to make casts of animal footprints for purposes of identification." "Before the Christian era, the Greeks and Arabs made mechanical toys powered by air, water, or mercury." "In Europe during the Middle Ages, a 'hobby' was a high-spirited, medium-sized breed of horse." "When China's first emperor, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, died in 210 B.C., he was buried with eight thousand life-size toy soldiers." "One variation of the game [checkers] was called 'losing checkers.' The first player to lose all his pieces wins the game." "The ingredient that gives Play-Doh its distinctive aroma is vanilla." "The highest recorded speed for a Ping-Pong ball is 105.6 miles per hour." "A new pinball machine costs over \$1,000. That's not a lot of money when you consider that the profit from one machine is \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year." "Kites were named in the sixteenth century after the kite, a type of bird in the hawk family. Kites have a broad wingspan, a long, tapering tail, and can remain in one place in the air by heading into the wind." These are but a few of several dozen interesting facts about the toys that Don Wulffson includes with his brief but entertaining as well as informative accounts of the origins of several of the most popular toys. Also noteworthy are the delightful illustrations provided by Laurie Keller. During this holiday season, especially, this would be an appropriate companion to one or more of the toys discussed in this book. With or without toys, I highly recommend it.

Needed for work. Good book

This book is entertaining for children and grownups alike.

This book gives a quick history of some very popular toys. Good for children and adults. A child does not have to read the whole book but may choose chapters about toys that he/she knows and loves.

Great read to students

I am a teacher and one of our Science modules is called Ideas and Inventions. I have used this book in my classroom for read-aloud time during this unit. The stories are interesting and to-the-point. The students are as interested in the various Toy origin stories as I am. I love discussing with them the humble origins that many of the most memorable toys of the last 100 years come from. You don't have to be a genius or wealthy to have a great, original idea.

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