

History of the original teddy essay



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Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither suffer much nor enjoy much because they live in the grey twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat. sic

The creation of the original teddy bear which is regarded as the perennial toy of the twentieth century complies with this philosophy.

Firstly, though, what denotes a toy? The most common definition states a toy as being a child's plaything, which suggests balls, dolls, games, puzzles and the like. Perhaps a more general definition which fits the entire age realm

is any object which stimulates the brain. A toy encourages learning through fun

challenges increasing in difficulty as the mind further develops. Most

importantly, toys keep children happy which is an essential emotion for growth

and development.(See illustration 1)Primitive toys served the same purpose;

they taught children the skills necessary to survive the world outside their

parents' protection. In essence, toys exist based on the instinct of self

preservation. Primitive toys and games taught manipulation of weapons and

warfare which instilled invaluable coordination, manual skills and mental agility. A primate's survival depended heavily on his successful use of the three.

Toys have remained an essential cultural icon throughout history. For example, an ancient doll concocted of organic materials such as clay, bone, and

wood is dated before 3000 B. C. Most ancient dolls beheld religious significance

which certain cultures still worship, such as the Pueblo Kachina doll known as a fetish. Also, ancient African societies produced balls, toy animals, and pull toys while ancient Greece and Rome entertained with boats, carts, hoops, and tops and in addition threw knucklebones similar to modern dice.

Furthermore, the Middle Age European societies created clay marbles, rattles, and even puppets as toy teaching devices. The same basic toys have encompassed one society after another with their evolution dependent upon the technology of the era. Today's toys are merely yesterday's upgraded replicas enhancing with each new discovery.

The toy world is vast but separable. It's four partitions include adaptations for infancy, early childhood, late childhood, and adolescence/adulthood.

Characteristics of infant toys include soft or plush fabrics and stuffings, movable parts, noisemakers, and even unbreakable mirrors so that the undeveloped mind can build its five senses. Some examples are stuffed

animals, mobiles and rattles. Toys for ages two to six, early childhood, such as puzzles, large building blocks, dolls and stuffed animals, plastic numbers and letters, and toy telephones develop this genre's basic mental abilities such as critical thinking, creativity and imagination, emotions such as caring, counting, reading and speaking. Sports oriented toys develop physical strength. Late childhood toys require more imagination from the six- to twelve-year-old mind which instills critical thinking skills. Action figures, dolls and stuffed animals allow children to create hypothetical problems and solve them. Play-Doh, paints, and markers and crayons build artistic ability while board and computer games force a child to plan his own strategy and guess that of his opponent's.

Approaching childhood's metamorphosis into adulthood, model and hobby kits are prevalent. Since they are not played with but rather displayed after completion, most people fail to see them as toys. However, their completion is a fun challenge which teaches discipline and patience which are two important

adulthood concepts. Children may then carry these hobbies into adulthood further impressing the lessons.

One toy which pervades the age gamut is the teddy bear. A teddy bear is a stuffed replica of an animal in nature. It stimulates an infant's sense of touch and helps develop a child's mental capacities. Although the accepted “

teddy bear age” ranges ages five to eleven, for some, collections run rampant

throughout adulthood. This is due to the unrelenting attachment that bonds an

owner to his teddy bear. A stuffed animal fulfills the basic needs of most

humans thus creating that impassioned attachment. It provides something to

touch, and it focuses a person away from the world of self. Attentive and

sensitive to its owner’s moods, the stuffed animal is a confidante and will

never repeat anything told sub rosa. Being a stuffed animal, the teddy bear

brings all such benefits.

“ Teddy Bear” by the nineties connotation is not limited to the bear

species; lately, “ teddy bear” refers to any stuffed animal be it a dog, a

rabbit, or even Shamu. However, the first teddy bear was actually a stuffed

bear, hence the name’s latter portion. How “ teddy” became associated with

the toy is a tale within the stuffed bear’s history.

The teddy bear derived its name from the twenty-sixth United States

president, Theodore “ Teddy” Roosevelt who was born on October 27, 1858

to

Theodore and Martha Bulloch Roosevelt in New York City. (See Illustration 2)

Called “ Teedie” by his father, he was the second of four children and endured an

asthmatic childhood. Because of his puny stature and persistently ill health, Teddy appeared passive and craven; however, he maintained an active lifestyle.

Inside his three-story birthhouse, which is now a national historic site, Theodore Sr. constructed a gymnasium equipped with weights and exercise equipment to build his son’s strength. Through daily workouts, Teddy overcame his asthma and gained unusual physical strength concurrently with a lifelong, insatiable desire to battle every hindering obstacle.

Eager to conquer the conflicts of the real world, eighteen-year-old

Theodore attended Harvard University in 1876 and graduated four years later in

the top of his class. His inquisitive nature peeved his professors so much that one bellowed during his lecture in medias res, ‘ Now look here, Roosevelt, let me

talk. I’m running this course!’On his twenty-second birthday, in 1880, Teddy married his college sweetheart Alice Hathaway Lee. However, February 14, 1884, just two days after the birth of a daughter, devastation ensconced

Theodore. Labor complications ceased Alice Roosevelt’s life; that same day

typhoid murdered Theodore's mother. Griefstricken, he alienated himself on two

ranches in the Dakotas along the Missouri river where hunting became his hobby

and eased his sorrow. Thereafter, his getaway lingered in the outdoors.

As he journeyed through life, Teddy Roosevelt practically became a

household name which then emerged his nicknames "Teddy" and "T. R."

He

polarized the American human dichotomy; he was either fully loved or entirely

hated by both sexes, but at any rate, he highlighted conversations.

Roosevelt's

outdoorsman attitude and "big stick" policy pronounced him with a powerful

appearance. As a politician, he once stated, 'I have always been fond of the

West African proverb: 'Speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far,'

meaning effective national leadership must be supported by a strong armed

forces. The country's male half worshipped him as a 'Man's Man.'

December 2, 1886, Theodore married Edith Kermit Carow, his childhood

friend, who bore him five children in ten years and raised Alice, Teddy's daughter from his first marriage. Roosevelt adored his children whose antics had America nicknaming them the "White House Gang," and he indulged in their playtime. He allowed their pets such as ponies and snakes into the White House and relayed attack refusals through the War Department when their mock army forayed their government home. Though Teddy's prominent parental personality emanated a caring, loving, emotional playmate, his disciplinary side hid closely beneath. His children unexpectedly discovered his dual personality as punishment proceeded random spitballs plastered across a portrait of Andrew Jackson. Because of Roosevelt's "family man" personage, wives and mothers of America adored him.

Not only in households was Roosevelt popular, but also in politics. In fact the two were interrelated. Journalists admired his contributions to the country and therefore graced him with positive publicity so that public opinion favored the man as well. Before T. R.'s presidency, he headed the Rough Riders which were a volunteer cavalry regiment compiled mostly of former college athletes and Western cowboys. February 15, 1898 during the Spanish American War, the U. S. battleship Maine fulminated in the Havana harbor; two months later on April 25, the United States declared war on Spain and Teddy, who was then Secretary of the Navy, recruited his men. July 1, the troops, already prepared for battle, deracinated the Spanish blockhouse on San Juan Hill in Santiago, Cuba. Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders won instant national fame.

Roosevelt proved himself a great individual; however, his individuality

seemed too strong. His fellow Republicans feared his motivated passion for reform and considered his legislation to be dangerously progressive and possibly

even socialistic. This only forced Roosevelt to strive for their acceptance and in 1901, he succeeded as he took the Vice-Presidency under William McKinley.

Six short months later, McKinley was assassinated. At the age of 43, Teddy became the youngest President thus far and re-elected for a full term in 1905.

During T. R.'s presidency, Congress passed several laws to regulate “big business” which is more commonly known as monopolies. Because of this, Roosevelt became known as the “trustbuster.” Though these regulations destroyed several monopolizing corporations, T. R. admitted that his purpose was not to “bust” the trust companies but merely keep order among the nation's

economical forces. Other regulations passed by Congress protected the public

from harmful food and drugs and conserved the national forests and reservations. Roosevelt also supported a progressive social program which

would delete segregation by racial disparages; at the time, slavery had been recently abolished and friction among the Caucasians and African Americans created national disharmony. Furthermore, T. R. fought to obliterate dishonesty

and unethical behavior amongst government officials, especially those granting

government jobs to political friends.

Of Teddy's accomplishments, he considered the Panama Canal his proudest. Roosevelt strengthened the U. S. Navy and realizing that this new, larger fleet needed to shift quickly between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, he

signed a treaty with the new Republic of Panama to build the necessary canal.

This shortcut provided the U. S. with a quicker means of supporting the Monroe

Doctrine which prevented European intervention in the Western Hemisphere.

Another of Teddy's proud moments arrived as he elegantly mediated the denouement of the Russo-Japanese War and becomes the first American to win

the Nobel Peace Prize.

Politically, Teddy Roosevelt is an heroic icon of the twentieth century. His contending actions and successful results win America's respect; his grasp of carpe diem wins the nations hearts. He enjoyed horsebackriding, hiking, boxing, swimming, and hunting. On several winter hikes, Teddy and his friends swam across the Potamic River through floating chunks of ice just for fun! Because of Roosevelt's political genius and passionate love of life, his popularity soared. T. R. radiated fame through his pores and impressed it upon even the most miniscule association with anything. His popularity reached its apogee however, in 1902.

1902 also marked Roosevelt's most controversial year. Divided between the Southern and National Republicans for a progressive social program, Teddy

invited Booker T. Washington for a White House dinner with the Roosevelts.

Because Booker was a former slave freed by emancipation and the foremost black educator of the late 19th century, Roosevelt discussed with him the potential appointments of blacks to Southern federal posts. This displeased the

National Republicans and they threatened to drop T. R. as candidate in the 1904

election. Nonetheless, Teddy searched for ways to appease them.

One example emerged late fall during a boundary dispute between

Louisiana and Mississippi, and Teddy became the righteous adjudicator. The

muddled negotiations seemed to wreak more havoc than solutions, so to clear

his head, T. R. took a break. His friends invited him on a four-day bear hunt in

Southern Mississippi. An expert on bears, Teddy respected and cherished not

only the bear species but also the entire animal kingdom. Hunting was his niche

and plus, he felt he could appeal to his Southern supporters in a relaxed atmosphere.

From this point the specifics of the story have minor variations but the

overall outcome remains the same. On November 14, 1902, the second day of

the trip, no bears had been sighted. Teddy's friends discovered a 235-pound

bear cub and roped it to a tree. Some state it was an old, sick Louisiana

blackbear that was run down by a pack of hounds, but nonetheless, it was

captured as a "trophy" for Roosevelt. Teddy's reaction to this peculiar

situation reflected his ethical, good-natured character in the purest manner.

Though Teddy knew his friends thought with good intentions, his respect for the hunting game prevented him from shooting the defenseless animal. Such

actions would be “. . . beneath his dignity as a hunter and man,” as he quoted

later, ‘ If I shot that little fellow I couldn’t be able to look my boys in the face again.’Roosevelt then shoed the cub back to its mother. However, an interesting twist to the variating story suggests that instead, Roosevelt ordered someone else to end the bear’s misery. This would coincide with the theory that the bear was dying of age and sickness. Despite the unsure facts, T. R. clearly demonstrated true sportsmanship in refusing to crassly kill a bound, defenseless animal in offset of an unsuccessful hunting exposition.

News of Teddy’s actions reached the press so rapidly that by November 16, Clifford Berryman who was a political cartoonist for the Washington Post published the artical in juxtaposition with T. R.’s boundary dispute. Possibly Berryman attended the trip as well but general opinion suggests he played no

part in it. His cartoon depicted the bear as a lassoed, shivering cub with Roosevelt’s back towards it and its demise with the caption, “ Drawing the Line in Mississippi.” (See illustration 3) Generally, the caption is accepted as referring to the boundary dispute but Gregory Wilson, head of Harvard <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-the-original-teddy-essay/>

University's Theodore Roosevelt archive, believes that it refers to T. R.'s 'color line,' or his support of black civil rights, instead. Americans, however, ignored the caption and fell in love with the cute cub and consequently Teddy Roosevelt. Berryman received several correspondences asking that he continue drawing the bear. He then adapted it as his personal trademark; in each cartoon, especially those involving President Roosevelt, appeared a tiny cub who evolved in America's minds as T. R.'s eternal companion. People identified the cub as "Teddy's bear."

Among those who observed this emotional phenomenon was Russian

immigrant Morris Michtom who owned a small confectionary with his wife Rose

in Brooklyn, New York. Morris envisioned a bountiful market for a stuffed toy version of the cartoon cub. He relayed the idea to his wife with a self-drawn pattern in hand and she quickly created a prototype with movable appendages.

Morris wrote Teddy and asked permission to affiliate his name with the bear since the general public already did so. Although Roosevelt lacked understanding of his connection with the toy's successful sales, he consented.

The Michtoms displayed the toy bear in their shop window behind a handwritten

sign reading, “Teddy’s Bear.” The movable creature became so desired that its

distribution was undertaken by Butler Bros, one of America’s largest toy wholesalers. Within a year, replicas resided in households nationwide.

Through his success, Michtom founded the Ideal Novelty Toy Company, which is

presently the Ideal Toy Company and one of the largest toy companies in the nation.

Concurrent with Roosevelt’s hunting trip and the events thereafter,

Margarete Steiff, a German dressmaker plagued by polio, designed her own version of a jointed, stuffed bear. Margarete was born on July 24, 1847 in

Geingen, a small town on the river Brenz in southern Germany. Though her

disease crippled her at the tender age of two, she attended school like any other German child. Her main classes involved sewing and needlework, but she also learned the zither which is a musical instrument with both a keyboard and

strings, well enough to teach others for a small fee. With her earnings, she

bought the first sewing machine to arrive in Geingen which she used to create

dresses for her friends and relatives. Margarete undertook fashionable work and

received substantial emoluments by the age of twenty-five. Her success and the

advice from her cousin who was the son-in-law to Geingen's wool felt supplier

persuaded Margarete into entrepreneurship. In 1879, she opened her own dressmaking business and experienced almost immediate success.

Because Margarete enjoyed giving handmade gifts to those close to her, she incessantly searched for new crafts. Thumbing through the December 1879

issue of 'Modewelt', a crafts magazine, she discovered a pattern for a toy elephant. She cheerily reproduced it in small quantities for her friends and acquaintances. Before long, Margarete added bears, poodles, and even donkeys and sold them in her shop.

The bears manufactured were not the teddy bear as the world knows it but merely replicas of real bears made of real fur and on all four paws. In 1892, Margarete offered 'soft-filled bears for small children' through her new "Steiff Company" which she founded in 1890 due to the rapidly increasing sales of her handstitched animals.

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Margarete maintained control of her company through specific business practices. Being a woman of great nationalism, she regulated product quality by operating only with West German industrial goods. She also shaped her clientele by refusing sales to communist countries.

Despite the forbidden sales, the Steiff Company excelled incredibly. In 1893, consisting of only four employees and ten outworkers, it accrued \$40, 000 net profit. As 1897 adjourned, ten employees and thirty outworkers including aid from Margarete's brother Fritz engendered a \$90, 000 turnover. To evenly distribute her products and more effectively meet their burgeoning demand, Margarete Steiff expanded her company to four factories: two in West Germany, one in Austria, and one in Tunisia.

Because the Steiff Company products became so widespread, Margarete submitted them to the Leipzig Toy Fair in 1894. Her nephew Richard, son of Fritz Steiff, manned the company's fair display and returned with a full order

book. As Margarete realized that people purchased Steiff products solely by recognition, she designed with Richard's artistic aid an elephant with an 'S'-shaped trunk as a business logo.

Richard Steiff often assisted his aunt in the design and production of her company's stuffed toy line. He metamorphosed his artistic interests into invaluable abilities at Stuttgart University in Giengen. Fervid about the animal world, Richard continuously studied and sketched a variety of species. In 1897, he attended Nill's Animal Show, an American touring circus, in search of ideas for a new popular toy. A family of performing, young brownbears particularly captured his interest so for weeks he sketched them and studied their antics. Convinced that bears were droll and loving instead of stereotypically vicious and cold-hearted, Richard believed stuffed bears would enchant the public as well. He presented the idea to Margarete and from his sketches, she meticulously designed a prototype from scraps of mohair cloth completing it in 1902.

Mohair, a favorite fabric of Margarete's, is the fine and silky, valuable fleece of the Angora goat which is coincidentally found in Angora. The average mature goat produces ten to sixteen pounds of hair annually which allow semiannual sheering, usually in March and September, in a copious supply.

As

the angora goat becomes larger and matures, the fleece becomes coarser and

less valuable. Margarete imported fleece only from the smallest and youngest

goats to ensure the highest quality fabrics.

Margarete designed the bear with mohair of soft color and gorged it with straw stuffing. It stared with quaint shoebutton eyes set deep in a triangular head accented gracefully with a gently pointed snout. A gusset, or center head

seam, extended to the tip of the nose. Because of the unsophisticated manufacturing techniques of early machines, a small hump appeared on the back just below the head. Long arms extended to the knees and tapered into slightly curved paws with oval or elongated triangular felt pads and embroidered

claws. Lengthy feet propped vertically in a one to five ratio with the body's remaining height. Most ingeniously though, the bear was jointed at the neck,

shoulder, and hips. Margarete named it "Friend Petz." (See Illustration 4)

This teddy bear was the first toy produced with mohair and the first upright bear with movable appendages. Because of the bear's rarity and appeal, the Steiffs anticipated instant sales. They entered it in the Leipzig Toy Fair of 1903, but to their dismay, the Europeans were not enthralled. Bored of

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awaiting interest in the bear, the Steiffs placed their toys into wooden crates and hammered the lids shut.

At that moment, Hermann Berg of George Borgfeldt ; Co. in New York glanced at the innovative bear. Realizing the potential market for the toy, he purchased 3, 000 for immediate delivery. Hermann recalled Morris Michtom’s rendition of “ Teddy’s bear” and the vast exposure through Berryman’s cartoons;

Steiff’s bear received unprecedented publicity before its own creation!

One year later, Richard Steiff attended the World Fair in St. Louis, Missouri and returned with substantial orders once again. By then, the Steiff Company had shipped over 12, 000 bears to America and thrust itself into a booming industry. At this time, Margarete desired a permanent more recognizable logo. On May 13, 1905, Franz Steiff, Margarete’s brother, registered with the German patent office the new Steiff trademark which was a small button in the left ear. The public associated the button quickly and sales boosted once again. 1907 is regarded by the Margarete Steiff & Co. GmbH as

the “ BarenJahr” or ‘ Year of the Bear’ based on the million-mark production which

is a company record yet to be broken. By 1910, the stuffed bear proved to be the world’s most popular companion. Margarete and Richard received a gold medal for their enterprise while the Steiff Company received the Grand Prix Award.

Teddy Roosevelt himself is responsible for the production of a few dozen bears. At the White House wedding of his daughter, Alice, in 1906, Teddy decorated the tables with Steiff bears dressed in varying outdoorsman attire which thematically represented T. R.’s passion for the outdoors. One guest inquired the bears’ breed knowing Roosevelt’s expertise on the species and when Teddy couldn’t answer, another guest exclaimed, ‘ Why, they’re Teddy’s

Bears, of course!’ From that moment, the stuffed bears became nationally recognized as the “ teddy bear.”

The teddy bear’s astonishing popularity boosted the sales of other stuffed animals. A multitude of species were replicated in the following decades such as rabbits, kangaroos, turtles, and uncountable others. A genre known as the “ literary bears” surfaced and children worldwide drifted into their

dreams hearing tales of Winnie the Pooh, Paddington, Rupert, Yogi, and Smokey. In 1905, English writer Paul Piper wrote under the nom de plume Seymour Eaton a series of books titled, “ The Roosevelt Bears: Their travels and Adventures.” Teddy B. -for brown- and Teddy G. -for gray- journeyed through their literary life in verses of mirth and jingle. The teddy bear craze was underway.

Unfortunately for historians and collectors, no early bears survive, not even in the Steiff museum. The only record exists as a blurred photograph in a catalogue of that era. However the original teddy bear’s desire and value is expected to remain through at least the next hundred years. Currently the value for a small, fine, old, light or gold bear is \$350. Values change for unusual sizes or conditions. Badly worn bears lose fifty percent of their value while the Steiff ear button increases the value by ten to twenty-five percent. An original Steiff giant panda standing twelve feet tall is valued in New Mexico at \$30,000. (See illustration 5) Values on the bears also fluctuate according to the economy in which they are sold.

Obviously, a Steiff bear for the average child's birthday is not the most price-convenient toy. However, the history and quality of the bear adds undying admiration and unimpeachable worth marking a special impression and connection on the tenderness of child's heart. Margarete Steiff firmly believed in such value and with every teddy bear produced, she upheld her strong, personal philosophy: " For our children, only the best is good enough."