

The Story of LEGO

You've probably seen Lego bricks before, played with them and constructed many wonderful things from them. But have you ever wondered how it all started and why it's called LEGO? Actually, the name is much older than the little, plastic brick that you might know. Let me tell you how it all began...

The Competent Carpenter

Ole Kirk Kristiansen was a skilled, competent carpenter who lived in Billund, Denmark and was born in 1891. He owned his own company, but times were tough and he eventually had to dismiss his employees. Shortly after, Ole's wife, Kirstine, died.

Dazzling ducks

Ole was tasked with looking after his four sons and knew he had to provide for them. He began crafting and making wooden toys and was inspired to create a wooden toy duck for his children that could be pulled along. Ole's invention made his sons so happy that he thought he should make toys for a living. He used the leftover wood from his carpentry business and never looked back.

Godfred saves the day

Time passed by, and despite the quality of the toys, sales were poor. In 1932, his son, Godfred Kirk Christiansen, began working in the business at the age of 12. He was an invaluable support and help to his father. Eventually, word began to spread that wonderful wooden toys were being produced in Billund, Denmark. The company became busier and busier and Ole could rehire his former workers.

Play well

It was now time to think of a name for the company. In 1934, the company adopted the name LEGO, formed from the Danish words "LEg GOdt" ("play well"). The company began to move forward. In the late 1930s, LEGO began to make a profit. With high sales, it seemed nothing could go wrong.

Disaster strikes

In 1942, the LEGO factory burned to the ground. All the drawings and models were destroyed and Ole was devastated. However, with Ole's determination, production began again and in 1946, Ole bought a plastic-moulding machine for toy production. Ole began to make tiny teddy bears and rattles. In 1949, LEGO began manufacturing their first building bricks, which the company are now known for.

All systems go

On a business trip to England in 1954, Godtfred met the head of a big shopping centre. They talked about toys and that they lacked 'idea and system'. This spawned the LEGO System idea in the mind of Godtfred Kirk Christiansen – helping children to use LEGO to create their own worlds and develop their imagination. Sales grew and the company got bigger.

Toy of the century

LEGO has now been named "Toy of the Century" twice. Their products have undergone many developments over the years – but the foundation remains the traditional LEGO brick.

The brick in its present form was launched in 1958. This interlocking brick is still unique, offering limitless building possibilities. It's just a matter of getting the imagination and mind going!

Questions to consider...

Have you ever played with LEGO before? What type of text is this? How do you know? What sort of man was Ole? Can you think of three adjectives to describe him? How does the author engage the reader in the first paragraph? Is it effective?

This text was inspired by 'The LEGO story' which can be found here: <http://www.literacyshed.com/the-history-shed.html>

These questions are about *The Story of LEGO*

1) When was Ole Kirk Kristiansen born?

_____ 1 mark

2) *times were tough and he eventually had to **dismiss** his employees*
Give the meaning of the word **dismiss** in the sentence

_____ 1 mark

3) Look at the sentence: *The company became busier and busier and Ole could rehire his former workers.*
What does this tell you about Ole?

_____ 2 marks

4) The word *devastated* is closest in meaning to...

Tick **one**:

<input type="checkbox"/>	consoled
<input type="checkbox"/>	distressed
<input type="checkbox"/>	reassured
<input type="checkbox"/>	worried

1 mark

5) Why do you think LEGO has been named 'Toy of the Century' twice?

_____ 1 mark

6) The Story of LEGO is made up of seven main events. Number each stage to show the order in which they happen. The first one has been done for you.

The factory burns down	
Ole's he has to fire his employees	1
The company decides on its name: LEGO	
LEGO begin producing their first building bricks	
Ole he creates a wooden toy duck for his children	
LEGO is named Toy of the Century twice	
Godtfred begins to work alongside his father	

2 marks