



A) V&A: Rocking horse 1610



B) V&A: Rocking horse 1930s

UK's oldest rocking horse is saved for the nation by the Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood

Task 1. VOCABULARY. These words are in the text you are going to read:

word	definition
acquisition	something that you have bought <i>e.g.</i> a painting: The <i>Mona Lisa</i> is an acquisition on display at the Louvre.
softwood/elm	2 types of trees [and the wood they produce] <i>e.g.</i> The table is made of softwood .
intriguing	[something] extremely interesting or fascinating <i>e.g.</i> The cinema audience found that guessing the identity of the murderer was intriguing .
guardian	someone who looks after a child instead of the parents. <i>e.g.</i> When John was working abroad, John's brother was his daughter's guardian .
remedial	treatment that makes you better <i>e.g.</i> My G.P. gave me some remedial exercises to do for my backache.
woodworm	a disease that attacks wood [for many years] <i>e.g.</i> The old desk was completely damaged by woodworm .
speculation	trying to work out why the reason why something happens <i>e.g.</i> There has been a lot of speculation on TV about Brexit.
rickets	a disease of the bones [in children] <i>e.g.</i> If poor children eat the wrong food, it can cause rickets .
provenance	origins [where someone or something comes from] <i>e.g.</i> Meghan Markle is of American provenance .
singularity	[what makes something] unusual or special <i>e.g.</i> The singularity of Islington Centre is its friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

Task 2. Read the text:

A 17th century rocking horse, which could have been commissioned as a gift for Charles I (1600–1649), was unveiled as one of the V&A Museum of Childhood's most important acquisitions. It was purchased for £25,000 from a private collector and went on public display in the Museum's new mezzanine galleries when the Museum reopened to the public on 9th December 2006.

Made of softwood and elm, the rocking horse pre-dates the earliest example in the Museum's collection of 20 rocking horses by 200 years and is believed to be the oldest in existence in the UK. It has been dated to 1610.

Diane Lees, Director of the V&A Museum of Childhood, said:

"This is probably the most important acquisition we've made at the Museum to date and comes at an extremely exciting time as we prepare for our reopening in December. I'm delighted that we've played a part in saving such an intriguing British object for the Nation and look forward to seeing it on display in our new galleries."

In 1610, Charles I was ten years old. The second son of James VI of Scotland, who also became James I of England, and Anne of Denmark, he was a delicate child with well-documented poor health, walking and speech difficulties. The household accounts list the making of a type of wheelchair for his use and Sir Robert and Lady Carey, his guardians between 1605 and 1611, arranged remedial treatment for him.

There is apparently no contemporary record of a rocking horse for Charles, but intriguingly, a plaque attached to the base records that this horse was '*Purchased on June 18th 1906 at Cheshunt House, Hertfordshire*'. If the horse belonged to any of the royal children, it may have been kept at Theobalds Palace, which is less than two miles away. Theobalds was a favourite residence of James VI and I, particularly for hunting. He died there, and Charles was proclaimed king. In 1650, towards the end of the English Civil Wars (1642-1651), Theobalds was sold and largely demolished for rebuilding in the early 18th century. It is very likely that items from the palace found their way into the other large houses in the area, of which Cheshunt Great House was one.

Noreen Marshall, Curator at the Museum of Childhood has surveyed the horse's history and said: *"It is frankly amazing that this horse has survived at all. Like so many historical toys it could so easily have been destroyed by woodworm, thrown away, or put on a bonfire. Children's toys have not always been highly regarded as important objects and an association with Charles I could have put it at even higher risk, especially as a consequence of the Civil War."*

Although it is impossible to prove the object's association with Charles I, there has been well-intentioned speculation throughout its history that it was a gift or purchase intended to help his weak legs recover from rickets. If indeed the horse belonged to Charles, it would probably date from 1605-08, as by 1610 he was ten years of age and had made significant improvements with his mobility.

Even if the horse's exact provenance remains unclear, it is believed to be one of the first English rocking horses and it is undoubtedly an extremely rare object of childhood material of its age and singularity.



Museum entrance



Museum ground floor

The V&A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA.
Admission free. Nearest tube: Bethnal Green. Open: 10.00 – 17.45.

24-hour information: 020 8980 2415 Switchboard: 020 8983 5200.

www.museumofchildhood.org.uk

The Museum was officially opened in 1872. However, it was not until 1974 that the Museum was officially dedicated to the subject of childhood. The V&A's collections of children's costumes, books, nursery items, art and furniture were relocated and redisplayed in Bethnal Green, alongside the Museum's existing toy collection.

The Museum of Childhood is part of the V&A and houses a world-famous collection of dolls and dolls' houses, games, puppets, toys, children's costumes and furniture. The Museum explores the history of childhood around the world – from the sixteenth century to the present day.

The museum re-opened on 9th December 2006, after an extensive and ambitious £4.7 million transformation by the architects Caruso St. John.

Task 3. Answer the questions:

- 1) Why is the V&A Museum of Childhood so important?
- 2). Describe the rocking horse mentioned in the text. [Picture **A**]
- 3). What differences can you see from the 1930s rocking horse? [Picture **B**]
- 4) Why do you think it belonged to Charles I? Are you certain?

Adverbs of Probability 	
possibly	doubtless
definitely	indeed
certainly	likely
clearly	of course
obviously	really
perhaps	surely
probably	truly
maybe	undoubtedly

Degrees of certainty [chances of something happening]:

<u>0%</u>	25%	<u>50%</u>	<u>75%</u>	<u>85%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	very unlikely	unlikely			
impossible		unclear	probably		undoubtedly
		maybe	likely	very likely	
		perhaps			certainly
		possibly			definitely
					clearly
					obviously
					doubtless
					surely

Possible answers:

Question 1: The V&A Museum of Childhood is so important, because it explores the history of childhood around the world – from the sixteenth century to the present day. The Museum of Childhood is part of the V&A and houses a world-famous collection of children’s art, books, costumes, dolls and dolls’ houses, furniture, games, nursery items, puppets and toys. It is easy to travel to, is open every day and admission is free.

Question 2: The rocking horse is over 400 years old and pre-dates the earliest example in the Museum’s collection of 20 rocking horses by 200 years. It is believed to be the oldest in existence in the UK. and has been dated to 1610. Although the museum cannot be certain, it possibly belonged to King Charles I of England (1600-1649), when he was a young child. It is made of softwood and elm. It is extremely simple and plain. It has a head and neck in the shape of a horse and rests on the floor.

Question 3: Although the 1930s rocking horse is almost 100 years old, it is much more modern. It has detailed features and is painted in the colours of a horse. It has a saddle for the rider to sit on and a bridle round its head and neck to keep it under control. It is in a frame or “cradle”, so it can move backwards and forwards easily, as well as up and down.

Question 4):

Expressions of possibility [not certainty] in the text:

- A 17th century rocking horse, which **could have been commissioned** as a gift for Charles I (1600–1649) . . .

- . . . and **is believed to be** the oldest in existence in the UK. It has been dated to 1610.

- *“This is **probably** the most important acquisition we’ve made at the Museum to date” . . .*

- There is **apparently** no contemporary record of a rocking horse for Charles . . .

- **If** the horse belonged to any of the royal children, **it may have been kept** at Theobalds Palace . . .

- **It is very likely that** items from the palace found their way into the other large houses in the area, of which Cheshunt Great House was one.

- *“**it could so easily have been destroyed** by woodworm . . .”*

- *“and an association with Charles I **could have put** it at even higher risk” . . .*

- Although **it is impossible to prove** the object’s association with Charles I, **there has been well-intentioned speculation** throughout its history **that** . . .

- it **would probably** date from 1605-08 . . .

- **Even if** the horse’s exact provenance remains unclear, **it is believed to be** one of the first English rocking horses and **it is undoubtedly** an extremely rare object of childhood material of its age and singularity