WORLD OF WONDERS
A BRAVE NEW WORLD

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Preface

*World of Wonders: A Brave New World* is the third in a series of books looking at a variety of important trends that are shaping the modern world. Each of the chapters examines a topic or issue that affects our lives, or which will change our lives in the future. We hope that you will find these topics interesting and thought-provoking. We also hope that they will be sufficiently stimulating to encourage you to learn more about these topics and issues.

The topics covered in the 20 essays range widely and are grouped into four sections: the worlds of culture and society, science and technology, business and economics, and politics and international relations. The topics are drawn from a number of areas ranging from one of the world’s favorite toys (Lego), to the importance of taking part in democratic elections. We hope that having read these essays, you will actively seek to develop your own views on the issues raised in this book, and that you will debate them vigorously.

As well as notes in Japanese following each essay, each chapter contains a pre-reading vocabulary exercise and post-reading exercises that are presented to test your comprehension of the essays. There is also a summary exercise for every chapter.

Finally, while we have tried to ensure that the material in this book is up-to-date, due to the fast-changing nature of some of the topics, it is inevitable that by the time the book is published, some things may have changed.

We sincerely hope you enjoy the book.

Anthony Sellick
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Building Blocks, Building Minds
The Amazing Success of Lego

Useful Words

Choose a word from the list below to complete each sentence.

1. After he got his ____________, nobody could copy his invention.
2. Losing weight is one ____________ of exercise.
3. It is important for companies to ____________ and develop new products.
4. Many people create videos and ____________ them to YouTube for everyone to watch.
5. He ____________ reads books. That is why he is so knowledgeable.

| upload | patent | constantly | innovate | benefit |

Reading

Have you ever played with Lego? Lego is one of the biggest toy companies in the world and one of the most well-known toy brands. Lego was founded in Denmark in 1932 by Ole Kirk Christiansen. The company originally made high-quality toys from wood. However, in 1958, Ole’s son, Godtfred Kirk Christiansen, patented the now famous plastic Lego block. The word Lego is derived from “leg godt,” which means “play well,” in Danish. It also means “I put together,” in Latin. Lego is a special kind of toy that
can inspire, educate, and entertain both children and adults.

2 Lego’s simple plastic building blocks encourage people to use their imagination and discover many different ways to play with them. This has become known as the “Lego System of Play,” and is the foundation of the huge success of the toy. Many people play with Lego their entire lives — from beginner sets when they are young, through more advanced sets as they get older, to enjoying Lego with their children as adults. In this way, Lego truly spans generations.

3 The key to Lego’s appeal is simply that children love to play with it. As all Lego blocks fit together, children can constantly make new toys and invent stories involving their creations. As well as being entertaining and encouraging creativity, playing with Lego also has other benefits. Scientists have found that playing with Lego when very young can improve children’s ability in math, perceptual skills, and problem-solving. Along with all these benefits, it provides a great connection between children and their parents. This ability of Lego to encourage teamwork and collaboration has been used by psychologists to help children with autism to improve their social skills.

4 Lego does not only make toys for children, however. In 1998, the first Lego Mindstorms toys were sold. These Lego toys were for adults and allowed people to build and program robots made from special Lego bricks. In 2004, the first World Robot Olympiad (WRO) — a series of games for robots made using Lego Mindstorms — was held in Singapore with teams from four countries. In the 2016 WRO, held in India, 21,700 teams from 56 countries took part. In the 2016 FIRST LEGO League, a similar competition for elementary and junior high school students, more than 255,000 children in 31,079 teams took part.

5 As shown by Lego Mindstorms, one reason behind the continuing success of the Lego brand is its ability to evolve and innovate. In its early years, it switched from making wooden blocks to plastic bricks. At that time, plastic was not often used in toys. The company has also formed tie-ups with other popular brands such as Marvel and Star Wars, allowing fans to build their own versions of those fantasy worlds. But perhaps the most important reason for the continuing success of the Lego brand is that it listens to its customers. Lego Cuusoo is a website that allows Lego fans to upload their designs and vote on other fans’ designs. If a design receives more than 10,000 votes, the Lego company will consider creating and selling a set for
that design. The first two products created as a result of fans’ votes on Lego Cuusoo were the Japanese Shinkai 6500 submersible in 2011 and the Japanese Hayabusa spacecraft in 2012. More recently Lego has introduced products using augmented reality such as the Lego AR Studio. Launched in December 2017, it allows children to combine physical Lego with virtual reality. For example, you can play with a fantasy castle Lego set while a fire-breathing dragon hovers above you! Lego is even used by some companies to develop their businesses, something which is called Lego Serious Play.

Like Disney, Lego even has its own theme parks and movies. The first Legoland opened in 1968 in Billund, Denmark. By 2017, there were Legolands in Dubai, England, Germany, Malaysia, Japan, and the United States (in California and Florida). Movies made with Lego, called brickfilms, have been made by fans since the early 1970s, and it is easy to find many brickfilms on Internet sites such as YouTube. The Lego company encourages this, and between 2000 and 2003, released several Lego Studios sets for movie makers. In 2014, the first Hollywood Lego movie, called The Lego Movie, was released. It was a huge success, making $469 million. Since then several more successful Lego movies have been made.

Today, Lego continues to be a powerful force in the toy world and beyond. Its mission “To inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow,” is still as relevant, powerful, and as fun as ever. Lego will undoubtedly continue to inspire future generations. As Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, the grandson of the founder said, “We are all growing older all the time, but we don’t need to grow up. There’ll always be a child inside and the child wants to have fun.”
Ole Kirk Christiansen「オーレ・キーア・クリスチャンセン (1891-1958)」デンマークの玩具メーカー LEGO®（レゴ®）の創業者。Godtfred（ゴールドフレッド：1920-1995）は三男、Kjeld（ケル：1947-）は次男。

Latin「ラテン語」 key to 「〜を理解する鍵(ポイント)」 perceptual skill「知覚能力」 autism「自閉症」 social skill「社会的交流能力」

Questions for Understanding

Look at the following statements. Write T if the statement is true, and F if it is false. Write the number of the paragraph where you find the answer in the parenthesis.

1. Since it began, Lego has made its toys from plastic.  
   T/F ( )

2. Lego is popular both with children and adults.  
   T/F ( )

LEGO® is the registered trademark of the LEGO Group. FIRST LEGO League is a registered trademark of FIRST Global, Inc. Marvel® and Star Wars® are registered trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. World Robot Olympiad is a registered trademark of FIRST Global, Inc. Billund is in Denmark. Dubai is in the United Arab Emirates.
Part 2  Look at the questions below. Check the best answer for each.

1. What is the main reason that Lego is popular?
   a. □ Lego is very good at marketing.
   b. □ Lego helps children to do well at school.
   c. □ Lego is enjoyed by children.
   d. □ Lego teaches people about new technology.

2. When will Lego decide to manufacture a Lego set on Cuusoo?
   a. □ When it is confirmed that there will be a tie-up with a big brand
   b. □ When the number of customer votes reaches a certain number
   c. □ When a large number of customers write to the company suggesting a certain model
   d. □ When children testing the models confirm it is popular

3. Why was the first Hollywood Lego movie made?
   a. □ Because Disney suggested a partnership deal
   b. □ Because many Lego fans told the company they wanted to see one
   c. □ Because the brickfilms suggested that there was a demand for an official movie
   d. □ Because a movie studio was created at Legoland in Denmark

4. What does Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen mean by his statement “We are all growing older all the time, but we don’t need to grow up.”?
   a. □ Lego is still popular among children of all ages
   b. □ Lego is trying to increase its popularity among adults
   c. □ Lego reminds us it is important to maintain a childlike curiosity in life
   d. □ Lego helps older people to relate to younger people
Summary

Fill each space with the best word or phrase from the list below.

enhance relevant evolve Olympiad derived from put together

The word Lego is 1) ______________ the Danish words “leg godt” which means “play well,” and the company has delighted children and adults for generations. Lego blocks can be 2) ______________ in an endless number of ways, which fires the imaginations of those playing with them. One key to Lego’s success is its ability to 3) ______________ and keep offering new sets to play with. Another is to incorporate new technology into their “system of play.” In 2004, a robot 4) ______________ was held in Singapore, in which all the robots were made from Lego Mindstorms sets. Lego’s success seems assured as it continues to 5) ______________ its products in order to remain 6) ______________ to new generations of customers.

What do YOU think?

Choose ONE of the statements below. Do you agree or disagree with it? Why? Prepare a short response giving your opinion.

- Lego is the best toy in the world.
- If you don’t encourage your children to play with Lego, you are a bad parent.

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

Plato (428-348 BCE)
Ancient Greek philosopher