Homes

Links to QCA schemes of work

History: Unit 2. What were homes like a long time ago?
History: Unit 1. How are our toys different from those in the past?
Science: Unit 1C. Sorting and using materials
Science: Unit 2D. Grouping and changing materials
Design and technology: Unit 1D. Homes
Art and design: Unit 9 (gen). Visiting a museum, gallery or site

Background notes

The Museum holds the largest public collection of dolls' houses in Britain, dating from the 17th to the 21st century. They can be used to teach children about homes in the past and the development of domestic technology. There are also a number of domestic objects on display, both full size and those intended as children's toys.

Early houses

The earliest surviving dolls' houses, or baby houses as they were sometimes called, date from 17th century Germany. These were not children's toys, but an expensive adult hobby. In the 17th century, the wives of wealthy Dutch merchants and bankers had miniature houses built into lockable cabinets. When they went to stay with friends, the owners would often take their cabinet houses with them. They would collect expensive miniature furniture and precious objects made by craftsmen to display in them.

The earliest British dolls' houses date from 1696-1720 and were often made in cabinets. Like the German and Dutch ones, most were intended for adult owners. However, the earliest known English example was a present to a child, Ann Sharp, from her godmother, Queen Anne. In the same period, German makers were producing single room teaching toys, such as miniature kitchens, which were designed to teach domestic skills as well as being recreational.



Nuremberg dolls' house, 1673

The oldest dolls' house in the Museum is the Nuremberg House, made in Germany in 1673, complete with a baby in a baby walker. There is also a Dutch cabinet kitchen, made sometime between 1600 and 1750, which was designed to show off the owner's miniature treasures. The Killer Cabinet House (1800-1830) was commissioned by a Manchester doctor for his wife and three daughters. The cabinet houses four rooms, including a well-equipped kitchen complete with servant dolls.

Cabinet houses never became really popular in Britain and the architectural style became the most common. An early example of this is the Tate Baby House, made in Dorset around 1760. This is built in three sections so that it can be taken apart. Like many dolls' houses, the furniture is not all of the same scale or period; it has been refurbished and added to by several generations of owners.

19th and 20th century houses

Up until the 1880s, dolls' houses were still generally owned by adults rather than children. Mrs. Bryant's Pleasure (1860-1865), another house in the Museum's collection, was owned by a Mrs. Bryant who lived in Surbiton. She commissioned a cabinet maker to make a copy of her house and furniture, but probably made most of the fabric furnishings herself. It is interesting to note that, like most houses of the period, there is no bathroom; instead there are wash stands in the bedrooms.

By the late 19th century, dolls' houses were commercially available. These were still expensive toys, however, some of which had lockable fronts so that even children who owned them would have to ask permission to play with them. Amy Miles' house was made for a young girl in the 1890s. It includes a bathroom, complete with bath and shower, plus a nursery, a schoolroom and a kitchen with a sink and tap.

The Museum has several late 19th and 20th century dolls' houses whose design, fixtures and fittings reflect changes in family life, society and technology. Number 3 Devonshire Villas (1900) still has servants' quarters downstairs and a well-equipped nursery at the top of the house. The Tri-ang house (1930s) has a flat roof sun terrace and includes a garage. The Galt House (1960s) is open plan, equipped with a television and stereo in the living area, whilst the Kaleidoscope House (2001) features the latest in designer living.



Nursery in 3 Devonshire Villas dolls' house, 1900

Domestic toys

In the past, objects like model kitchens and toy stoves were intended to teach children domestic skills as well as being recreational. Full size Victorian kitchen ranges were heated by coal, but toy examples often used paraffin. This was perhaps not quite as dangerous as it seems; children would only have been allowed to play with them under the close supervision of an adult. In the Museum, the kitchen ranges are displayed together with modern examples including microwave ovens; children can compare the different materials and forms of energy.

The Museum also has a number of examples of washday toys, including toy buckets, washboards, mangles, a clothes horse and irons. Before the invention of washing machines, washing clothes and linen took all day. Children can use the objects to discuss how you would have fetched the water, heated it, scrubbed the clothes, rinsed them out and dried them. Ironing would probably have taken most of the next day; children can discuss how to heat the flat irons on the kitchen range and compare them to electrical ones.

Useful websites

- www.geffrye-museum.org.uk
  Includes a virtual tour of the museum's domestic interiors dating from the 17th century to the late 20th century.
- www.educate.org
  Lesson plan by Year 1 teachers using a dolls' house in conjunction with QCA History Unit 2.
- www.hants.gov.uk/museum/toys/history Includes an overview of the history of dolls' houses.

Pre-visit activities

Domestic toys

Make a collection of modern domestic toys; you may already have some in a "homes" corner of the classroom, or children could bring in some of their own. Discuss jobs that need to be done in a home (e.g. cooking, cleaning, washing). How are the toy objects different from real ones? What sort of energy do most real ones use?

Homes long ago

Make a collection of old domestic objects – original or replica (e.g. flat iron, carpet beater, chamber pot). Many local museums have loan boxes that you can use. Alternatively, if your school's budget stretches to it, objects can be bought quite cheaply from antique markets or from companies specialising in replica items for schools and museums (e.g. TTS, History in Evidence, telephone: 0800 318686).

Encourage children to role-play using the objects. Would doing the housework have been easier or more difficult in the past?

Story time

Borrow, or buy for the class library, copies of *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle* and *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* by Beatrix Potter. Both are available in large, paperback format and have excellent illustrations, the former of Victorian/Edwardian washday tools and the latter of a dolls' house and contents. Both are suitable for reading to KS1 pupils.

What to see and do in the museum

- Look at all the dolls' houses in the "Home" area in the Childhood Galleries on the upper floor
- Look at the full size domestic objects displayed with the dolls' houses and the toy objects displayed separately
- Play with the wooden dolls' house in the "Home" area
- Role-play using the domestic objects in the Victorian kitchen activity area

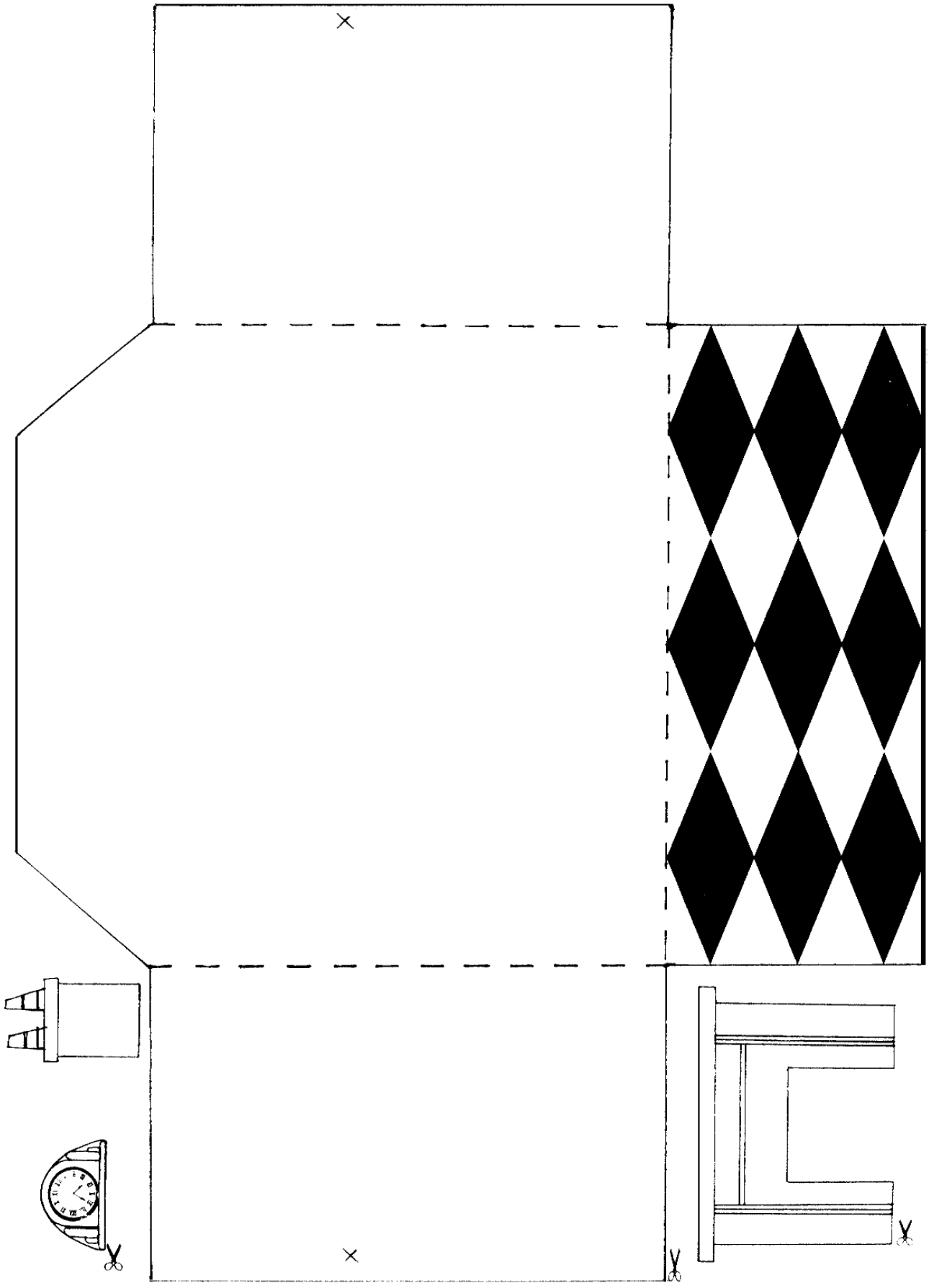
Post-visit activities

Make your own dolls' room

1. Photocopy the template provided onto card.
2. Colour in and cut out the "furniture".
3. Cut out the room and fold along the dotted lines.
4. Design your own wallpaper and glue the "furniture" in place.
5. Use a hole punch to make holes on the spots marked X.
6. Fold up the house and tie with string through the holes.
7. Make additional furniture using "junk" such as cotton reels, matchboxes and toothpaste lids. Place these in the room.

Which room in the house have the children made?

Make your own dolls' room



Guide sheet 1

Homes

The Museum has a large collection of dolls' houses and domestic toys that can be used to teach children about homes in the past.

Go to the "Home" area in the Childhood Galleries on the upper floor

Find the Tate Baby House (1760)

(It is on display along the wall between the two staircases.)

- Is this a new or an old dolls' house?
- How many storeys high is it? Can you count the windows?
- What is the outside of the house painted to look like?
- What are on top of the roof? Why?
  (There are chimneys on the roof to let the smoke from the fires escape.)
- Can you find the fireplace in each room?
- What sort of lighting is used in the house? Why?
  (Candles were used because electricity was not invented yet.)
- See if you can find: a baby's cradle; a pair of bellows *(for blowing air on the fires to make them burn);* a warming pan *(for heating the bed).*
- What else can you see? Are they the same as or different to things we use today?

Find the Killer Cabinet House (1800-1830)

(It is to the right of the Tate Baby House.)

- Can you find the kitchen?
- Who are the "people" in the kitchen? What jobs would they have done?
  (Servants would have done all the housework like cooking, cleaning and washing.)
- Can you see the kitchen range? *(the cooker and Dutch oven)*
- How were real ones heated? *(with coal)*
- Look at the sitting room on the left of the kitchen. Is there a television set? Why not?
- Can you see other ways for people to entertain themselves in this room?
  (e.g. chess set, books, children's toys)

Find Mrs. Bryant's Pleasure (1860s)
(It is next to The Killer Cabinet House.)

- Can you name the five different rooms in the house?
  (There are two bedrooms, a sitting/living room, a dining room and a kitchen.)
- What room is missing that we all have in our homes today? *(a bathroom)*
- Can you see how Mrs. Bryant would have washed herself?
  (There are washstands with jugs and bowls in the bedrooms.)
- Do you know where the toilet would have been?
  (Outside – and a chamber pot under the bed for use at night.)

Find Amy Miles' House (1890s)
(If you stand at the top of the staircase to the left of the Killer Cabinet, it is in the case in front of you.)

- Is this house older or newer than the others you have looked at?
- See if you can find: a sink and tap; a carpet sweeper; a shower; an electric light; a bicycle; a sewing machine. These would all have been new inventions!
- What things in the house are still old-fashioned? *(e.g. the toys in the nursery, the clothes the dolls are wearing, the kitchen range, the carpet beater)*

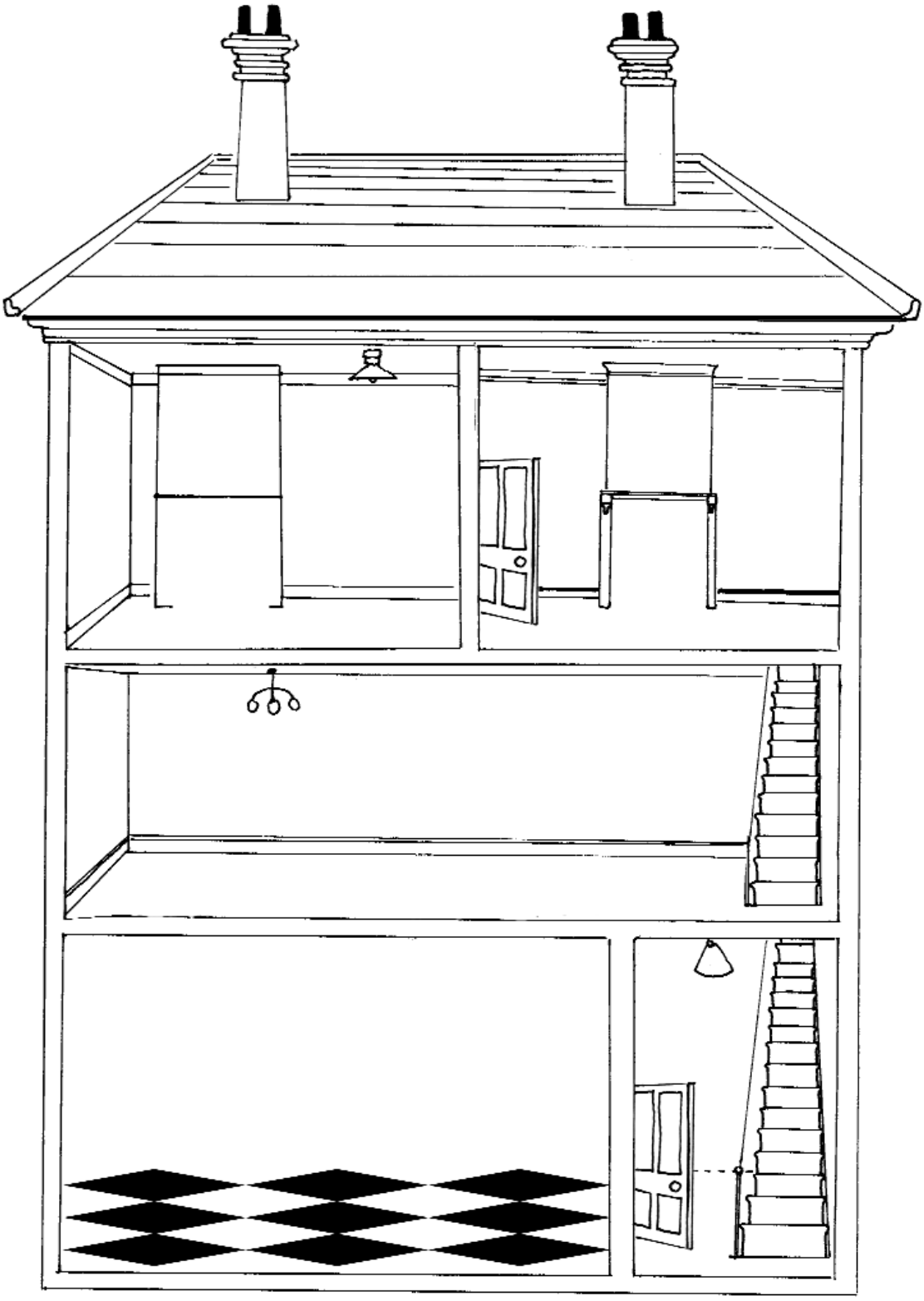
Other things to see and do in the Childhood Galleries

- Look at the other dolls' houses in the "Home" area. Which one is most like the home you live in? Which one would you most like to play with?
- Look at the domestic toys in the "Who will I be?" area. Which are old and which are new? How would you use them?
- Play with the wooden dolls' house in the "Home" area.
- Role-play using the domestic objects in the Victorian kitchen activity area.

Activity sheet 1

Homes in the past

- Look at all the old dolls' houses.
- Complete the picture below by drawing in furniture and objects that would have been in a home in the past.
- You might want to include some people too!

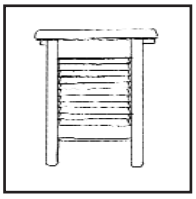


Activity sheet 2

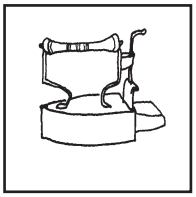
Let's play homes!

Find the old and new toys in the pictures below. Match the jobs they help you do by drawing a line to connect them.

Old



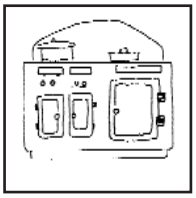
a wash board



a flat iron



a dustpan and brush

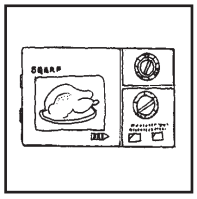


a kitchen range

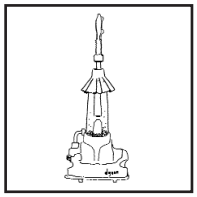


a kettle

New



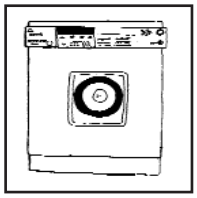
a microwave oven



a vacuum cleaner



an electric kettle



a washing machine



an electric iron

Can you complete the word to spell the name of an old toy that you would use to squeeze the water out of clothes?

M _ N _ _ E

