

The Teddy bear - a symbol of unloneliness

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Introduction

Since this little chap appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century, people have cuddled it for comfort, kept it with them for luck, used it as a confidant and a role model, and given it as a symbol of love. For almost a century the teddy bear has been the most enduring of soft toys, often ravaged by affection.



Now, it is finding a new place in the hearts and homes of many - as the basis of a treasured collection. People who collect teddy bears have a special name, arctophiles, and their hobby is known as arctophily. Both terms derive from the Greek words, *arctos* (meaning bear) and *philos* (meaning love).





Those in the caring professions - doctors, nurses, psychotherapists and so on - have long recognized the therapeutic powers of teddy bears. Besides bringing the comfort associated with hugging, teddy bears have been used to teach nurturing skills and to help people come to terms with emotional disturbances buried from earlier times.

The police use them as they try gently to break through to a traumatized child or adult; many charitable organizations adopt the teddy bear as their symbol, for we all identify with its tender qualities.

Who does not feel better for the unconditional friendship of a teddy bear?



Teddy Bear beginnings



The story of the birth of the teddy bear is well known; most experts and arctophiles trace it to November 1902, when the 26th President of the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt, known to his friends as Teddy, celebrated the settlement of a border dispute in the southern part of the country by taking time off to go bear hunting.

The story goes that all attempts to drive a bear in front of the President's gun failed; ultimately a bear cub was captured and tied to a tree at which point the President was called. A big game-hunter and sportsman, as well, incidentally, as a conservationist, the President refused to shoot the hapless animal.





Photography being only in its infancy at this time, news events were generally portrayed in the newspapers by illustrators. Travelling with the President on this trip was a cartoonist and newspaper artist, Clifford K. Berryman, who drew the incident, which then duly appeared in the *Washington Post* with the headline, "Drawing the Line at Mississippi".

What happened next is that Rose Michtom, the wife of a Russian immigrant who ran a stationery, confectionery and toy shop in Brooklyn, made a soft, jointed bear modelling it on Berryman's cartoon figure. It is said that the Michtoms wrote to the White House asking the President's permission to call it "Teddy's bear", and the story runs that Roosevelt granted this. From that time on, the teddy bear became inextricably linked with President Roosevelt.





Less than two years later, in 1904, Roosevelt was faced with an election and it is from this time that the first "promotional" teddies date, for a bear that closely resembled the one portrayed in Berryman's cartoons became an important part of the President's election campaign. Ranging in size from 6 to 12 inches (15-30cm), little googly-eyed (sideways-glancing) teddies were made and thrown from the Presidential train as it toured the country.

Roosevelt supporters sported a teddy bear hanging from a disc pinned to their coal lapels, which read: "Won't you be my teddy?" Rival campaigners tried to spread stories that Roosevelt had little time for teddy bears, but the public, in turn, had little time for the stories, so completely had the little plush teddy bears captured their imagination.





While the teddy bear was experiencing birth and popularity in the United States, it was also being "born" on the other side of the Atlantic, in Germany. There can be no doubt that its origins were quite separate here, not influenced, at least initially, by the Michtom's teddy bear or the story of the President. Just as those early people in different parts of the world set the bear in the sky independently of one another, so the teddy bear was experiencing dual, quite separate origins.

The story in Germany begins with a family by the name of Steiff, now synonymous with teddy bears. Margarete Steiff was born in July 1847, and by the time she was eighteen months old she was suffering the ravages of polio—a disease that was to leave her bereft of the use of her legs and with only partial use of her right arm and hand.





Her parents added sewing lessons to her daily schooling, and she went on to become a talented seamstress as well as an astute businesswoman. She initially set herself up in the felt-working business, but when this fabric became unfashionable for ladies' clothes,

she developed a sideline hobby of producing felt toys. Her first venture was an elephant, which could be a child's toy or a pincushion gift for an adult. It was her brother, Fritz, who recognized the commercial potential of these toys, but he convinced his sister only when he sold a sackful at a market and returned with orders for more.






Other soft animal toys were added to the range, including, in 1892, a bear on all fours, mounted on wheels. The company was clearly successful as toy manufacturers, so much so, that five of Fritz Steiff's sons joined the business. One was Richard, who in his spare time, would go to the zoo and sketch the captive bears, cubs in particular. A gifted designer, in 1902 he created a new model bear, which, while undoubtedly resembling a real bear, was designed along the lines of a jointed doll.



It was made of longhaired plush fabric, it had long, movable limbs and a stout body, given a fairly soft filling, and its long snout shaven. Richard's design, known as Petz, used shoe buttons as eyes and replaced the sealing wax nose of the earlier wheel-mounted bears with stitching.








The result was a soft toy instead of the much less yielding, all-fours bear or the definitely uncuddly mechanical bears that had so far been the bear representatives on the toy market.



These bears were shipped to New York in February 1903, and the scepticism of Richard's aunt, Margarete, seemed well-founded when they by and large failed to make the leap from the shelves of New York shops to the nurseries of American families.



Notwithstanding this initial failure, Richard Steiff took his bears to the Leipzig Toy Fair the following month, where, probably to his own amazement, he received an order for 3,000 from an American, Hermann Berg, who had been a buyer for some years for the then world-famous toy importers George Borgfeldt & Co.





There is no doubt that these two sources, the Michtoms, later to become the Ideal Novelty & Toy Co., of Brooklyn, New York, and the Steiffs, of Giengen, Germany, were the producers of the first teddy bears, and both can claim its earliest origins.

Where soft toy animals had most frequently been made using real fur, Richard Steiff used the fabric that is still probably the most widely used in teddy-bear making today - mohair plush.

This luxurious fabric, which is now available in a range of finishes, is woven from the fleece of the angora goat. Steiff's early teddies, with their long limbs, pointed muzzles and humped backs, tended to be more bear-like than their American counterparts, which were appealing and cuddly from the start. One of the first bears ever made by Richard Steiff was actually grey; known as a 55PB, only a very few were made making it among the rarest, and most valuable, of bears today.





Within a year, recognizing that the market requirement was for more instantly "friendly" teddies, Richard Steiff had modified his bears making the body and limbs less chunky and using a lighter coloured fur. The result was dramatic. By the end of 1904 the Steiff company had sold some 12,000 bears, and Margarete Steiff had been awarded two Gold Medals and the Grand Prix award for her industry and efforts in the toy world.

Once teddy bears had arrived, everyone, it seemed, wanted them. Right from the beginning they captured the imagination of adults as well as children, and owning a teddy bear, whether you were a girl or a boy, a child or a grown-up, seemed to be acceptable. Inevitably, as the popularity of these little furry fellows was universally recognized, individuals and companies began to jump on the bandwagon, and cheap imitations of the early teddy bears began to appear all over the place.

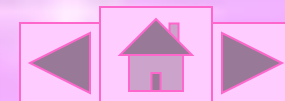




World War II may have seen a fall in the numbers of teddy bears on the market as materials were in short supply and factories were called on to manufacture items for the war effort, but there was certainly no less a demand for these furry companions.

What greater comfort to a child being evacuated away from the dangers of bombs to some seemingly far-off part of the country than to tuck a much-loved teddy bear under his or her arm at the start of the unknown journey?

Servicemen going off to fight would often take along their childhood bear or one given to them by a loved one in the hope it would act as a talisman. Others would give bears to girlfriends, fiancées and wives as companions, reminders and guardians against the time they returned.





The stories of such bears are legion; sadly, many have less-than-happy endings. The years 1939-45, and even beyond, could reasonably be termed the era of the homemade bear; mothers and aunts knitted teddy bears or made them from any scraps of soft cloth they could find, including scraps of sheepskin and old blankets, often following patterns given in magazines, so that children should not have to go without this essential companion.

Teddy bear manufacturers did still produce bears but had to resort to using cheaper materials, cotton plush replacing mohair and a sort of waste from the textile factories known as "sub" often used for stuffing.



Media Bears



Long before the birth of the teddy bear at the beginning of this century, bears were the heroes, and anti-heroes, of many folk and fairy stories. Pre-twentieth-century illustrations often depicted the bears standing up and using their paws in a human way.



They even appeared clothed in some instances - apparent precursors of the teddy bear. With the appearance of the teddy bear toy, however, there followed a host of stories about bears, in which the illustrations were now definitely modelled on teddy bears, and the bears and their adventures veered towards the anthropomorphic. The teddy bear craze, however, extended far beyond the publication of stories and the production of cuddly teddy bears.





The most famous fictional bears must surely be three separate creations from the pens of British writers. In the order in which they appeared, if not necessarily in their order of fame, they are Rupert Bear, Winnie-the-Pooh and Paddington Bear

Winnie-the-Pooh is probably the world's most famous fictional teddy bear, his adventures having been translated into more than twenty languages, including Latin. He is actually based on a real teddy bear, one bought by Dorothy Milne at Harrods, London, in 1921 for her son, Christopher Robin, on his first birthday.

Dorothy's husband, Alan Alexander Milne, started to write stories about the bear, whose original name was Edward Bear, and these were first published in 1924 in an anthology of poetry, *When We were Very Young*.





Soon after, it seems,
the bear's name was
changed to
Winnie-the-Pooh -
Winnie after an
American black bear
that was in London
Zoo and Pooh,
somewhat bizarrely,

from the name of Christopher Robin's
favourite swan. However the bear got his
name, his adventures published in the
subsequent Winnie-the-Pooh books -
Winnie-the-Pooh (1926) and *The House at
Pooh Corner* (1928) - have been staples of
childhoods the world over ever since.





Add to this the fact that most collectable teddy bears have been made by hand so that each one appears just slightly, subtly different, its expression reflecting the way that the person who stitched the face was feeling at the precise moment the bear was made.

Teddy bears have become like "little people", silent, yet understanding companions, providing for many people an important link to childhood and an antidote to loneliness. You have only to talk to people who are interested in teddy bears or to listen to the stories of those who are involved in the buying and selling of them to know that none of this is an exaggeration.



Arctophily

It is probable that people began to amass collections of teddy bears soon after they first appeared on the market. The desire to collect lies deep within most of us, apparently related initially to the need to gather - to ingest - in order to survive.

With our basic needs more readily served than they were in the days of our earliest ancestors, our collecting instinct turns towards more material things.

Collecting teddy bears today is as understandable as the fascination of wild bears was to primitive man. Their furriness makes them soft and cuddly, they are capable of standing up on their hind legs as we do, they appear to hold their arms out to us in what can be interpreted as a hugging gesture, and the fact that their eyes are set in the front of their head giving them a forward-facing expression awakens a response in us.





Elderly people are often desperate that their loved teddy should find a new home where it will be equally treasured and cared for. The excitement of someone who has bought a bear that has caught their eye in a sale is almost tangible.

There is perhaps one man, above all, that could be termed the godfather of arctophiles, who made the collecting of teddy bears both popular and acceptable on both sides of the Atlantic. This was the British actor, Peier Bull, who collected teddy bears himself and also wrote the first book about them, *The Teddy Bear Book*, in the late 1960s.





He appeared on television in the UK and USA, talking about teddy bears and doing much to promote their collection. His own particular favourite teddy was apparently a miniature Steiff dating from the late 1940s, called Theodore, which was given to him to celebrate a first night and which he referred to as "a symbol of unloneliness".

Serious collecting probably took off in the USA first, reaching the UK in the early 1980s. From there it spread to Europe and, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, to Japan where it has grown apace. The first specialist shop, selling nothing but teddy bears and catering exclusively for the collector's market, opened its doors in the UK in 1985.





Since then, the movement has exploded. *The UK Teddy Bear Guide 1996* lists over two hundred shops and sources for teddy bears, although admittedly this includes auction houses and dealers and not all the shops sell nothing but teddies. It also lists nearly four hundred bear makers and teddy bear artists who sell their bears.

There are, in addition, now numbers of teddy bear auction houses are good for old bears because they reach a large audience and also have experts who are usually able to recognize the maker. They will also often put a buyer in touch with a previous owner so that you can discover more about the bear's immediate past, which is always of interest to a true arctophile.





Old bears in bad condition need them to undertake repairs and restorations, but people should undertake any repair by studying the magazines and books that deal with this subject. A better alternative is always to take a damaged bear to one of the excellent "teddy bear hospitals" that abound; here repair will be done by experts who know what materials to use and how to clean fur to restore it.

By now we will realize that teddy bears are one of the few givers of unconditional love. This they have been doing for close on a century; it seems certain that their appeal, their friendship and their value, both emotional and material, will reach far into the next century. Remember, as one slogan runs: "A teddy is for life, not just for Christmas!"



Vocabulary

1. a chap-маленький парень
2. to cuddle-обнимать
3. a confidant- любимец
4. to endure- выдерживать испытание временем
5. affection-привязанность
6. nurture- воспитание
7. to come to terms with- прийти к соглашению с..
8. charitable- благотворительный
9. to trace- прослеживать
10. ultimately-в конце концов
11. a conservationist- защитник природы
12. hapless- несчастный
13. infancy-ранее детство
14. duly- в должное время
15. stationary- постоянный





16. confectionery- кондитерские изделия
17. inextricably- неразрывно
18. to resemble- походить, иметь сходство
19. to sport- носить
20. to pin- прикалывать
21. a lapel- лацкан
22. a rival- соперник
23. plush- плюшевый
24. dual- двойственный
25. ravage- разрушение
26. polio- полиомиелит
27. to bereave(bereaved, bereft)- лишать
28. a seamstress- швея
29. astute- проницательный
30. a venture- рискованное предприятие





31. a pincushion- подушечка для булавок
32. a sackful- полный мешок(чего-л.)
33. to mount- садиться на велосипед
34. to sketch- делать эскизы
35. undoubtedly- несомненно
36. a limb-конечность
37. stout-полный, крепкий
38. snout- морда
39. a stitch- шов
40. notwithstanding- вопреки
41. amazement-изумление
42. to claim-претендовать, утверждать
43. to weave (wove, woven)-плести, ткать
44. fleese-овечья шерсть
45. to appeal-привлекать
46. dramatic- впечатляющий
47. inevitably- неизбежно





- 48. to jump on the bandwagon-
примкнуть к движению,
имеющему шансы на успех
- 49. a supply- поставка, запас
- 50. far off- отдалённый
- 51. to tuck- засовывать
- 52. legion- множество
- 53. beyond- позже
- 54. to term- выражать, называть
- 55. to knit- вязать
- 56. a scrap- лоскуток, клочок
- 57. to depict- рисовать,
изображать
- 58. a craze- повальное
увлечение
- 60. a staple- главный элемент
чего-л.





61. to amass- собирать
62. fascination- очарование, обаяние
63. hind- задний
64. a gesture- жест
65. a response- ответ
66. slightly- слегка
67. subtly- едва различимо
68. to stitch- шить, вышивать
69. precise- определённый
70. an exaggeration- преувеличение
71. tangible- реальный, осязаемый
72. apace- быстро
73. an auction- аукцион
74. to undertake- предпринимать
75. to abound- быть в большом количестве
76. vigour- сила, энергия

