

# Reading

## Just a Doll?

Read the text below, choose the correct answer

(A, B, C, D) for each question.

The Barbie doll is a cultural icon that has been loved by generations of children and adults around the world. The history of Barbie began in 1959 when it was first introduced by Mattel, an American toy company. The creator of Barbie, Ruth Handler, was inspired by her daughter's fascination with paper dolls and wanted to create a three-dimensional doll that girls could play with. The first Barbie doll wore a black-and-white striped swimsuit and had blonde hair styled in a ponytail. With her slim figure and stylish clothing, Barbie quickly became a sensation and embodied a new kind of femininity that was both aspirational and controversial.

Throughout the 1960s and 70s, Barbie continued to evolve, reflecting trends in fashion, entertainment, and social issues. She became a symbol of girl power during the feminist movement, and her career options expanded to include astronaut, doctor, and presidential candidate. In 1961, she was featured on the cover of Time magazine, cementing her status as a cultural icon. That same year, the first Barbie Dreamhouse was introduced, complete with plastic furniture and accessories, and quickly became one of the most popular toys of the decade. In 1963, Mattel introduced the Barbie Baby-Sits doll, which came with a tiny baby and a miniature bottle. This was one of the first dolls to feature a play pattern that emphasized caretaking and nurturing skills, a trend that would continue to grow in popularity throughout the years.

The 1980s and 90s were a time of change for Barbie, as she was accused of promoting unrealistic body standards and consumerism. In response, Mattel made efforts to diversify the Barbie line, introducing dolls with different skin tones and body shapes. The Barbie Fashionista line, launched in 2009, featured dolls with 7 different skin tones, 14 different facial sculpts, and 9 different body types. In 2019, Barbie took another step towards inclusivity with the launch of a line of dolls with disabilities, including a doll with a prosthetic leg and a doll with a wheelchair. This move was praised by disability advocates and demonstrated Mattel's commitment to promoting positive messages of empowerment.

Mattel's Barbie Dream Gap Project, launched in 2018, is a global initiative that aims to tackle the gender inequality. The project is rooted in research that shows that girls begin to doubt their own potential and abilities around the age of 5, leading to a "dream gap" where they believe certain careers and achievements are out of reach. The project seeks to bridge this gap by providing resources and

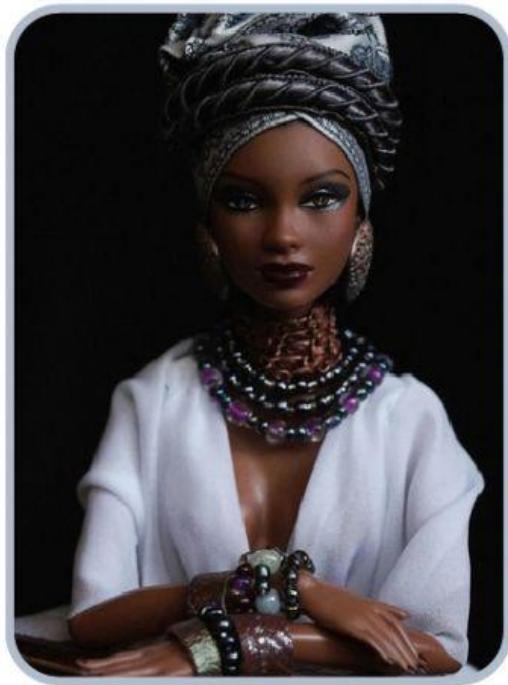
support including funding research on the factors that contribute to the dream gap, and partnering with organizations that empower girls. Through the Dream Gap Project, Mattel has also provided funding for programs that support girls in areas such as robotics, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. By inspiring and encouraging girls to believe in themselves and pursue their dreams, regardless of societal limitations or barriers, Mattel hopes to make a positive impact on the lives of girls everywhere.

A common misconception about Barbie is that she was created solely for girls. While Barbie has long been marketed towards young girls, the doll has also been popular among boys and adults of all genders. In recent years, there has been a growing movement towards gender-neutral and inclusive toys, and Barbie has responded by introducing dolls with a variety of gender expressions and styles, such as the



"Creatable World" line which features gender-neutral dolls with interchangeable hairstyles and clothing. Another misconception is that Barbie dolls are only intended for children to play with. While Barbie dolls were originally viewed and advertised as toys for kids, they have become popular collectibles among adults and have even been displayed in museums and art galleries. In addition to traditional Barbie dolls, there are also limited edition and artist-designed Barbies that are highly sought after by collectors. The Barbie brand has also collaborated with high-end fashion designers such as Moschino and Oscar de la Renta to create couture Barbie dolls and clothing lines.

Today, the Barbie brand remains a beloved part of popular culture and a symbol of girlhood imagination and creativity. The doll has been featured in countless movies, TV shows, and books, and has even inspired a line of fashion and accessories. In recent years, Barbie has continued to evolve with the times, incorporating technology and social media into its marketing strategies, such as the Barbie YouTube channel and the Barbie Dreamhouse Adventures mobile app. The history of the Barbie doll is a reflection of the changing attitudes and values of society over the past several decades. Whether you love or hate Barbie, there is no denying its impact on the world of toys and popular culture. Barbie has become more than just a doll, she is an icon and a reflection of the hopes and dreams of generations of children and adults around the world.



**1 What is not true about Barbie, according to the first paragraph?**

- A) She didn't have many clothing items on.
- B) She wore her hair loose.
- C) She was created by a woman.
- D) Her story began last century.

**2 In the 60s, ...**

- A) feminists fought against Barbie.
- B) Barbie's creator became a presidential candidate.
- C) she appeared in a well-known publication.
- D) Barbie had no career opportunities.

**3 What was heavily criticized?**

- A) Mattel's lack of commitment to promoting positive messages of empowerment.
- B) Introducing dolls with different skin tones and body shapes
- C) Failing to launch a line of dolls with health problems.
- D) Barbie's portrayal of physical beauty and materialism.

**4 What was the Barbie Dream Gap Project?**

- A) A worldwide campaign that addressed discrimination of girls
- B) A line of fashion and accessories inspired by Barbie
- C) A program to teach children about entrepreneurship
- D) A line of dolls with disabilities

**5 How has the Barbie brand responded to the growing movement towards gender-neutral toys?**

- A) By introducing a line of appropriate dolls
- B) By discontinuing the production of Barbie dolls for girls
- C) By creating a line of dolls exclusively for boys
- D) By promoting Barbie as a collectible item for adults