

## **A craze for 'loom bands'**

- 1.** In this era of babies playing with tablets and young teenagers living and breathing social media, it seems curious to find that rubber bands are a big thing.
- 2.** Playgrounds and living rooms are under invasion from coloured bands. Children are spending hours twisting them into bracelets. Parents are getting tired of picking them up from behind sofas and off the floor. Some schools have even banned them after pupils used them as weapons.
- 3.** The Rainbow Loom, a plastic device for turning small rubber bands into jewellery, has sold more than three million units worldwide. The sheer scale of the craze can be seen in the stats for Amazon UK. All 30 of the best-selling toys are either looms or loom-related. The products top the sales list for every age group except the under-tuos.
- 4.** Children use the looms, or their own fingers, to weave coloured bands into items such as bracelets, necklaces and charms. They use dozens of different designs, recommended on YouTube and by word of mouth, including the "fishtail", the "dragon scale" and the "inverted hexafish". More ambitious projects include skipping ropes, animal shapes and even a suit worn by US TV host Jimmy Kimmel.
- 5.** Multicoloured bands sell for as little as £1.99 for 1,800. Rainbow Looms - frames used for knitting the bands - retail at under £20. In an age when the toy market is dominated by more complicated toys and expensive computer games, backed by marketing campaigns, how did they become so popular?
- 6.** Rainbow Loom was invented in 2011 by Cheong Choon Ng, a Malaysian-born former seatbelt technology developer from Michigan, who noticed his daughters weaving elastic bands over their fingers to make bracelets. Ng tried it but his own fingers were too big, so he built himself a "loom" - using technology known to the clothing trade since at least the 15th Century - using pins and a wooden slab. His daughters were impressed with the more intricate patterns this allowed.
- 7.** Ng developed a plastic version and set up a business manufacturing them, investing \$10,000. He got a toyshop to stock his product and, after it sold out within a few hours, other stores took an interest. It spread from there and looms and bands can now be seen in schools and homes around the UK and US.
- 8.** "It wasn't driven by advertising or big companies," says Richard Gottlieb, founder of consultants Global Toy Experts. "It's what I call the social network of the playground. It started out in a specific geographical location and just spread from there. You get these phenomena every few years. There's a difference between creating a product that sells and a phenomenon. There's a bit of magic about it."

**9.** A school in New York banned loom bands after reports they had caused playground fights. The Furness Academy in Cumbria did the same earlier this month, informing parents of the decision by text message. "They felt they wanted to nip it in the bud," says a spokeswoman. "Some of the children were throwing them around inappropriately. There were many tens of them around left around on classroom floors."

**10.** "It's part of the charm of these crazes that the kids find something they can do at school until they are banned," says Esther Lutman, assistant curator at the Museum of Childhood. "They keep pushing new stuff, particularly in the summer, when they spend more time in the playground together."

**11.** Concern over mess caused by discarded bands is echoed by the mother and blogger Big Fashionista, who complains that "these pesky little bands get in more places than they really should, my house is overrun with them". The US writer Hallie Sawyer describes Rainbow Loom as "Silly Bandz on crack" which will "someday clog up every landfill in America".

**12.** "Loom bands are bigger," says Sawyer "I would bracket them with marbles in the Victorian era, yo-yos in the 1930s and hula-hoops in the 1950s. They are quite cheap, which helps explain their spread around playgrounds. They are at their absolute peak now. Who knows what will be next?"

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1. Look at paragraph 1. In your own words why does the writer find the craze of loom bands 'curious'?

2 marks

2. "Playgrounds and living rooms are under invasion from coloured bands". Comment on the effectiveness of this quotation in relation to the article.

2 marks

3. With close reference to the text how does the writer know that loom bands are popular among children?

4 marks

4. In your own words, what two ways do children learn how to make different designs?

2 marks

5. Look at paragraph 5. Why has the writer used a rhetorical question to end the paragraph?

2 marks

6. Find the five facts about the creation of loom bands.

5 marks

7. In your own words, what was unusual about the spread of this craze?

3 marks

8. Discuss in detail how the writer has shown the down side of the craze.

4 marks

9. What does Hallie Sawyer mean when she says "Silly Bandz on crack" when describing the loom bands?

2 marks

10. Look at the whole article. Why do you think loom bands have become so popular?

4 marks

<p>1. Look at paragraph 1. In your own words why does the writer find the craze of loom bands 'curious'?</p>	<p>2 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are really simple</li> <li>• Children prefer technology/gadgets</li> <li>• It isn't something you do online</li> </ul>
<p>2. "Playgrounds and living rooms are under invasion from coloured bands" Comment on the effectiveness of this quotation in relation to the article.</p>	<p>2 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metaphor 'under invasion' effective in showing that the bands are large in number, and have taken over.</li> <li>• Metaphor 'under invasion' shows that adults feel under attack by the craze</li> </ul>
<p>3. With close reference to the text how does the writer know that loom bands are popular among children?</p>	<p>4 marks</p>	<p>2 marks for example 2 marks for explanation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has sold more than three million units worldwide</li> <li>• The sheer scale of the craze can be seen in the stats" for Amazon UK.</li> <li>• All 30 of the best-selling toys are either looms or loom-related.</li> <li>• they had caused playground fights</li> </ul>
<p>4. In your own words what two ways do children learn how to make different designs?</p>	<p>2 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Videos on the internet – <b>must make attempt to put YouTube into own words</b></li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Speaking to other people</li> </ul>

<p>5. Look at paragraph 5. Why has the writer used a rhetorical question to end the paragraph?</p>	<p>2 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the reader question the craze</li> <li>• Make the reader think</li> <li>• Make the reader wonder why the bands are so popular when they are so simple.</li> <li>• Show the writer's thoughts.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Find five facts about the creation of loom bands?</p>	<p>5 mark</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invented by a seatbelt engineer</li> <li>• Idea came from watching daughters paying with elastic bands</li> <li>• The loom is a very old invention</li> <li>• The loom was originally used in the clothing industry.</li> <li>• Created in America</li> <li>• Invented in 2011</li> <li>• He created the loom cause his fingers were too big</li> <li>• Inventor called Cheong Choon Ng</li> <li>• He invested \$10 000</li> <li>• Sold in a toy shop to begin with</li> <li>• Sold out in hours</li> </ul>

<p>7. In your own words what was unusual about the spread of this craze?</p>	<p>3 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It started small</li><li>• Well- known brands didn't start the craze</li><li>• It has taken over the UK and US quickly</li><li>• It began in one area and spread</li><li>• Invented by a man who wasn't a toy maker</li><li>• The toys are simple</li><li>• Children are normally preoccupied with technology</li></ul>
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<p>8. Discuss in detail how the writer has shown the down side of the craze.</p>	<p>4 marks</p>	<p>2 examples 2 explanations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A school in New York banned loom bands after reports they had caused playground fights.</li><li>• "Some of the children were throwing them around inappropriately.</li><li>• There were many tens of them around left around on classroom floors."</li><li>• "these pesky little bands get in more places than they really should, my house is overrun with them".</li><li>• The US writer Hallie Sawyer describes Rainbow Loom as "Silly Bandz on crack" which will "someday clog up every landfill in America".</li></ul>
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<p>9. What does Hallie Sawyer mean when she says "Silly Bandz on crack" when describing loom bands?</p>	<p>2 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Silly bandz' was a previous craze, and this one is worse.</li> <li>• They are like a drug for children</li> </ul>
<p>10 .Look at the whole article. Why do you think loom bands have become so popular?</p>	<p>4 marks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheap</li> <li>• Videos to watch</li> <li>• Friends can help</li> <li>• Easy to do</li> <li>• Being banned in schools</li> <li>• Anybody can do</li> <li>• Don't need much to get started</li> <li>• Can buy a set</li> <li>• Can make interesting objects</li> <li>• Any other appropriate response</li> </ul>