Oliver Brookes, "Entry on: Lego Minifigures (Series) by The LEGO Company ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/314. Entry version as of November 04, 2026.

The LEGO Company

Lego Minifigures (Series)

United Kingdom / United States (2010)

TAGS: Amazons Athena Caesar Cyclops / Cyclopes Emperor Faun Gladiators Medusa Minotaur Neptune Odyssey Pan Perseus Poseidon Roman Empire Spartans Theseus





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Lego Minifigures (Series)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom, United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
First Edition Date	2010
First Edition Details	Lego Minifigures Series 1 (set number: 8683) was first released on March 5, 2010 in the United Kingdom and on June 4, 2010 in the United States, brickset.com (accessed: August 3, 2018).
Official Website	lego.com (accessed: August 3, 2018)
Genre	Blocks*, Figurines*, Mythological fiction
Target Audience	Children (5+)
Author of the Entry	Oliver Brookes, The Royal College of Nursing, orbrookes@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



The LEGO Company (Company)

The LEGO Group (accessed: July 6, 2018) is a toy manufacturer founded in 1932 by Ole Kirk Kristiansen, in Bilund, Denmark. Having no overt classical associations, they are most famous for their manufacture of the LEGO brick first released in 1958, and minifigures as of 1974. LEGO define themselves as providing "good quality play" through their products that enrich a child's life, and lay the foundation for later adult development. All of their products are based on the underlying philosophy of 'learning and development through play*.

The LEGO Brand identifies their core values as "imagination, creativity, fun, learning, caring, and quality'. Through this play, they believe they believe that we learn 'by putting things together, taking them apart, thereby creating new things, and developing new ways of thinking about ourselves and the world (accessed: May 24, 2018). Aside from the physicality of construction that LEGO offers, there is also the way of learning and development through the use of minifigures. A standard LEGO minifigure, for instance those found in the City theme, may fulfil roles in the police, fire department, or airports. However, as LEGO has grown increasingly in popularity, so has its connection with popular culture. Some of its most popular sets are within the Star Wars, Marvel, Disney, and DC Comics franchises.

Prepared by Oliver Brookes, The Royal College of Nursing, orbrookes@gmail.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Summary

LEGO's permeation into popular culture is evident through its release of thematic sets to coincide with the release of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* in 1999, and through its collaboration with Marvel Comics, DC Comics, and *The Simpsons*. As of 2010, LEGO began to release themed collectible minifigures that were based on fantasy, sports, history, and popular culture. A minifigure is defined as a small posable person with 'rotating arms, legs, hands, and heads… (with) connectors on their bodies that are compatible with LEGO bricks and other elements*.' These figures were sold in individually packaged and unmarked bags that made acquiring them a random process. Since their initial release, there have been 24 series released to date that illustrate not only their popularity, but also their variety**.

To date, there are fifteen figures that are related to the Classical world. These can be divided into two categries: mythological and historical. These are set out in the table below. It is interesting to note the rise in frequency of production of new figures as time passes. It could be purely coincidental, or, much more likely, it could be evidence of the importance of the Classical world in the learning and development of children. These figures must resonate with the designated audience strongly enough to be purchased, or else they would not be designed and produced. The sales of these figures aided in a growth of more than 10% in the UK in the first six months of 2016***.

Figure 1 – Table of LEGO Minifigurines

Lego Minifigure (name as appears on website)	Relation to Classical World (mythical)	Mythical/Historical	Series Number
Spartan	N/A	Historical	2
Gladiator	N/A	Historical	5
Minotaur	Theseus & the Minotaur myth	Mythological	6
Roman Soldier	N/A	Historical	6
Ocean King	Poseidon	Mythological	7
Cyclops	Homer's Odyssey	Mythological	7
Roman Emperor	N/A	Historical	9
Medusa	Perseus, Athena & Medusa myth	Mythological	10
Roman Commander	N/A	Historical	10
Warrior Woman	Amazon	Mythological	10
Battle-Goddess	Athena	Mythological	12
Lady Cyclops	N/A	Mythological	13
Faun	Pan	Mythological	15
Roman Gladiator	N/A	Historical	17

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

* Farshtey, G., 2013, 8.

** LEGO series: Two for *The Simpsons*, one for Disney, one for Great Britain in the Olympics, one for *The Lego Movie*, one for the *Lego Batman Movie*, and one for the *Lego Ninjago Movie*.

*** "Lego sales soar as mini figures become a craze in playgrounds", *The Guardian,* published November 30, 2011 at theguardian.com (accessed: August 3, 2018).

Analysis

On the website, each minifigure has a small, two-paragraph biography. Like all content on the website, it is available in 26 different languages. While it does not discuss the global accessibility of the figures, it provides the opportunity for individuals to view and learn about these mythical and historical characters online. All historical figures are named accurately, yet this is not true for mythical figures. Some, like the Minotaur and Cyclops are named as someone with knowledge of classical mythology would expect. However this is not true for the depiction of deities. The minifigure with the attributes of Athena is named Battle-Goddess, whilst the figure with the attributes of Poseidon is called Ocean King. This may initially seem like a simplification of complex deities but it also demonstrates the features of these gods that are seen essential by the LEGO group, and the most interesting elements of the deities that can be communicated to children.

The biographies on the website are another way in which both mythic and historic individuals are intended to appeal to children, while acknowledging their classical past. The summary of the Ocean King tells of his ability to have ‘absolute control of the waves and the tides’, and of the ‘absolute woe to any sailor who dares to anger him’* which suggests Poseidon’s role in delaying Odysseus’ return from Troy, as narrated in Homer’s *Odyssey*. We are told that leaving a cookie in the right tide pool will ensure a safe voyage for travellers. Through this humorous recasting of classical mythology, children are offered an opportunity to learn about the relationship between humans and the divine in a modified contemporary context that they are more familiar with.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw.

Each minifigure has its own set of attributes, and, thus, its own iconography. The designers of these individual figures, much like classical sculptors and vase painters, had to ensure that their figures were instantly recognisable through identifiable traits. It is likely that the choice of these particular items is a combination of what is stylistically interesting and displays a sense of commonality with the iconography of deities in the classical world. These motifs allow the user, with or without any specific classical knowledge, to correctly assume that the figure is associated with the sea, and that, due to the headwear, he must be a king. In both cases sculptural and painted representations of Poseidon played a large part in inspiring their portrayal.

When these figures are provided in their most basic context, removed from any information about their individual character, these figures become altogether different. Unlike a character in a book, video-game, film, or play, the minifigure exists entirely in its own space. There is no context, no implicit narrative, and no direct association save that which the user provides. The lack of narrative means that the individual is able to place these figures into their own stories. In this case, it is for the child or individual to project their own potential experience, knowledge, and associations of the classical world onto the minifigure including through different elements in popular culture, such as film or literature. Therefore no two people will view the figure in the same way, as all users will have differing levels of knowledge varying from non-existent, to expert. It is here where the iconographic motifs that are ingrained into popular culture are used most prominently, to identify the minifigures' associations with the classical world. It is likely that the strength of these motifs is cross-cultural, and due to the way that the classical world has permeated into popular culture through such media as films, video games and literature.

* LEGO Group Mini-figure biography (accessed: August 3, 2018).

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and

Amazons Athena Caesar Cyclops / Cyclopes Emperor Faun Gladiators Medusa Minotaur Neptune Odyssey Pan Perseus Poseidon Roman Empire Spartans Theseus

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Concepts

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	History Names Pop culture references Religious beliefs Society War

Further Reading

Farshtey, Greg and Daniel Lipkowitz, LEGO *Minifigure: Year by Year A Visual History*, London: Dorling Kindersley, 2013.

"Lego sales soar as minifigures become a craze in playgrounds", *The Guardian*, published November 30, 2011, theguardian.com (accessed: August 3, 2018).

LEGO Group, *LEGO Group About us* page (accessed: August 3, 2018).

LEGO Group, *LEGO Group brand* (accessed: August 3, 2018).

LEGO Group, *Minifigure biography* (accessed: August 3, 2018).

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.