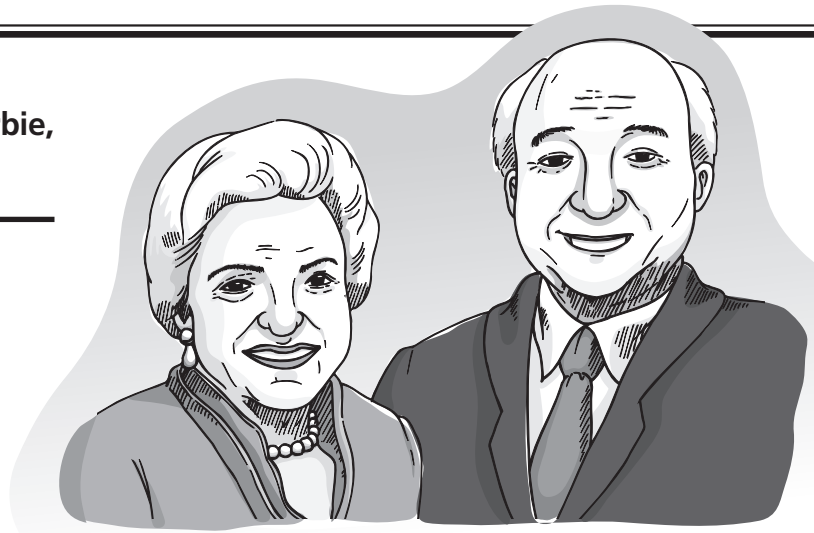


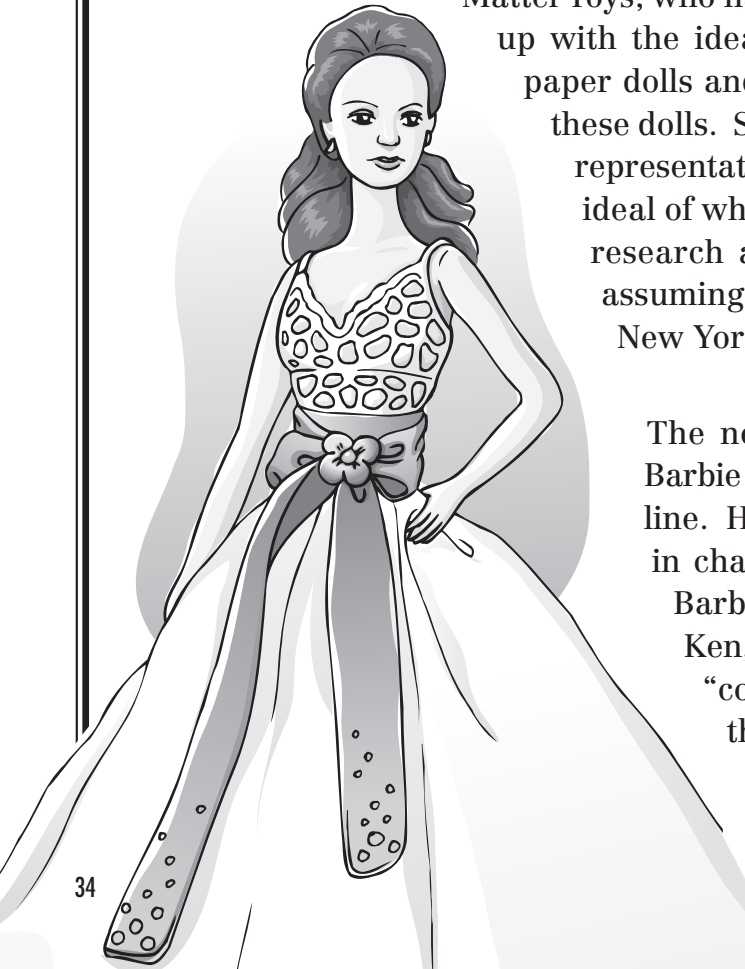
Read the following story about Barbie, the world's most famous doll.



The World's Most Famous Doll

It is difficult to believe that Barbie, the most famous doll in the world, has turned 50 this year (2009). Her slim figure, striking good looks, and fashionable clothes continue to make Barbie an American fashion and lifestyle icon.

Barbie was the invention of Ruth and Elliot Handler, founders of Mattel Toys, who named the doll after their daughter. Ruth came up with the idea after observing her daughter playing with paper dolls and verbalizing adult-like conversation between these dolls. She decided then to create a three-dimensional representation of a doll that would symbolize the American ideal of what a young woman should be like. After much research and design, Ruth Handler unveiled this doll, assuming the career of a teenage fashion model, at the New York Toy Fair on March 9, 1959.



The next evolutionary step in the development of Barbie as we know her today was to establish a clothing line. Handler commissioned Charlotte Johnson to be in charge of the Barbie clothing line. By 1961 the Barbie craze had spread to Europe. That same year Ken, Barbie's boyfriend, came on the scene. In 1964 "college" Barbie was introduced and she became the epitome of the modern woman – educated

and sophisticated. Barbie then evolved into a modern, professional woman assuming over 80 careers, including doctor, rock star, astronaut, and presidential candidate, throughout the years. The first black Barbie was introduced in 1980, and in an effort to establish worldwide appeal, Barbie underwent design changes to represent over 40 different nationalities. Barbie's family and friends have expanded over the years as well. She now has 6 siblings, over 50 friends, and more than 43 pets.

Though Barbie has had much success, the doll has met some criticism along the way. One of the most common complaints is that Barbie's figure promotes an unhealthy body image for young girls. If the standard Barbie doll was enlarged into a real person, she would be about 175 centimetres tall and severely underweight at just below 50 kilograms. In comparison, the average Canadian woman is about 160 cm tall and 68 kg in weight. In 1997, Mattel responded by giving Barbie a wider waist citing it would make the doll better suited to contemporary fashion designs.

Nevertheless, Barbie's popularity continues on. Mattel estimates there are over 100 000 devoted adult Barbie collectors in the world. The hobby of doll collecting is second only to stamp collecting as the most popular hobby in the United States. Though the first Barbie was sold for 3 dollars, with 350 000 dolls purchased that year in the United States, the same 1959 version would fetch over 10 000 dollars today at auction. The Barbie business generates an estimated 1.5 billion dollars annually with roughly two dolls purchased every second somewhere in the world.

Barbie's iconic status can be found in many places including in a recent book called *The 101 Most Influential People Who Never Lived*. Inside, Barbie takes the 43rd spot on the list with other cultural giants such as Santa Claus, Mickey Mouse, and Batman. The subtitle of the book, "How characters of myth, legends, television, and movies have shaped our society, changed our behaviour, and set the course of history" accurately describes the special place these characters have in people's lives.

These days, millions of children visit the Barbie website (www.barbie.com) where they can peruse the latest fashions, join the Barbie fan club, and purchase accessories. Even as Barbie enters middle age, the fascination with this symbol continues to grow.

- 1** What was significant about Ruth's inspiration for Barbie?
- Ruth's daughter played with paper dolls.
 - Ruth's daughter pictured the dolls as adults.
 - Ruth's daughter gave the dolls voices.
 - The New York Toy Fair was coming up.
- 2** What is the **main** message of paragraph 3?
- Barbie leads a popular life with many friends and animals.
 - Barbie's life has undergone many changes.
 - Barbie has changed nationalities to suit different countries.
 - Mattel wanted to make Barbie a fashion icon.
- 3** Which word **best** describes the people who criticize Barbie's figure?
- hurt
 - nervous
 - jealous
 - concerned
- 4** Which statement is **not** true about Barbie's popularity?
- The original 3-dollar Barbie can be sold today for over 10 000 dollars.
 - Roughly one Barbie doll is sold every two seconds in the world.
 - There are over 100 000 devoted adult Barbie collectors.
 - Over one billion dollars is made by the Barbie brand every year.
- 5** Which of the following **best** describes Barbie's influence to society, according to the book *The 101 Most Influential People Who Never Lived*?
- She has shaped society.
 - She has changed our behaviour.
 - She has set the course of history.
 - She has shaped society as well as set the course of history.

