

THE POWER OF LIMITLESS PLAY



DID you know that as well as being fun, playing is really important and is crucial to our development? The LEGO Group told us about it and introduced us to a very special young man!

We all know that playing is fun, but we have now found out just how good it can be for our development too! The LEGO Group believes that play can help develop lots of core skills we need for future success, including creativity, problem solving and resilience. Pretty good news, right?

● Rebuild the world

That's why the LEGO Group launched its Rebuild The World campaign, designed to celebrate how kids of all ages build, unbuild and rebuild the world with LEGO creations. Recently, as part of this project, the LEGO Group worked with a London primary school to re-imagine and rebuild the world around them to make it a happier place for all, with some very creative results!

But there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to play and it doesn't need to be in the form of a big project. Play is something we all experience differently and is unique to our personalities, skills and strengths. One person who is taking the concept of 'limitless' play to the next level is Year 9 secondary school student Alejandro Fernandez-Khonyongwa, who is visually impaired and incorporates LEGO Braille bricks into his version of limitless play. We found out about Alejandro's story and how play has helped him to explore his creativity and imagination.

To find out more about LEGO Rebuild The World, please visit www.lego.com/en-gb/campaigns/rebuild-the-world



MEET ALEJANDRO

JUST after Alejandro was born, he developed a condition called retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), an eye disorder that led to Alejandro having to undergo multiple surgeries at a very young age. Unfortunately these were not successful and meant that Alejandro lost all his sight in his left eye, and most sight in his right eye.

Play is a vision-dominated activity, where we see a toy and reach out to grab it, but this was difficult for Alejandro due to his sight loss. Living in a sighted world where we rely on our vision to interact meant that play was naturally more difficult for Alejandro, who couldn't see the objects or toys to touch, hold or explore. Instead, he had to be taught how to use all his senses, such as his hearing and touch, to learn how to play and do all the things that most of us do automatically.

None of these challenges blocked Alejandro's creative abilities, or meant he couldn't have his own unique play experiences. Having been introduced to LEGO at around four years old, Alejandro used senses such as touch and sound to help him imagine and build his own world. For example, Alejandro would listen to the click sound the LEGO bricks made when they snapped together to understand how they connected, to help him build something spectacular. He also uses his LEGO Braille bricks to spell out words to add to his creations.

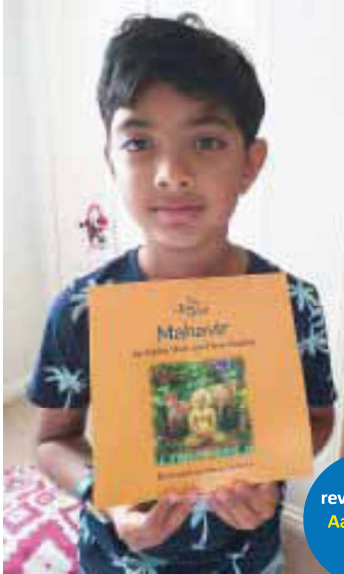
Alejandro's mother explained that because Alejandro does not see the world in the same way the rest of us do, his imagination has no limits, leaving him free to re-imagine and redefine. Because he doesn't start a build in the same way we might, the outcomes of his LEGO builds are wonderfully different, as well as creative. Inspired by the LEGO Rebuild The World campaign, Alejandro built a LEGO model inspired by his love of travel, which he named a 'Carplaneship'. It featured elements of a car, plane and ship, because, as Alejandro asked: "Who says they can't function together simultaneously?"

Now, that's out-of-the-box thinking!

While play always will be fun, it can also stretch our imagination, unleash our creativity, broaden our horizons and develop skills needed for the future.



YOUR READS!



MAHAVIR SUNITA SHAH AND NIRAV GUDHKA

This book is a story from the Jain religion, about a boy called Mahavir who goes on to become a special god called Tirthankar. Mahavir was born part of the royal family of Kundapur, India, but stayed away from all the glories of royalty.

I recommend the book to all age groups who can read, as this book is made for everyone to read and the illustrations are very detailed, which makes the reader understand more about the characters.

My favourite part was when Tirthankar Mahavir stopped a stampeding elephant, the elephant quietened down and came to a steady halt.

reviewed by
Aadi, aged
eight

Five out of
five stars!



WE WANT YOUR BOOK REVIEWS!

We'll need around 100 words on a book you've been reading and a picture of yourself (with parents' permission!) sent to bookreviews@firstnews.co.uk.

National Literacy Trust's Virtual School Library

PRESERVE the planet with Josh Lacey, our author of the week in the Virtual School Library!



Are you giving Veganuary a go or making an effort to preserve the planet?

Visit the Virtual School Library from the National Literacy Trust to read *Hope Jones Saves the World* for free, watch an exclusive video about Josh's latest book, *Hope Jones Will Not Eat Meat*, and find recommended reads.

Josh recommends these books:

- *Charlotte's Web* by EB White
- *The River Cottage Family Cookbook* by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Fizz Carr
- *Politics for Beginners* by Alex Frith, Rosie Hore and Louie Stowell



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WIN! A £150 LEGO GIFT VOUCHER

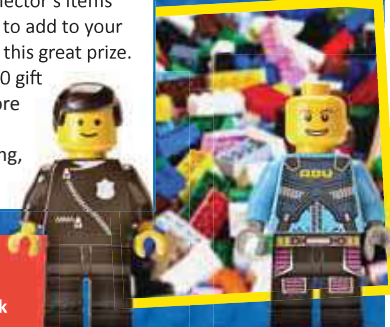
ARE you fanatical about LEGO? If so, this is the competition for you, as we are giving one lucky reader the chance to win £150 worth of LEGO vouchers!



The online LEGO store is packed full of amazing sets, Minifigures and collector's items to help inspire you. You'll be able to add to your collection or start a new one with this great prize.

One lucky winner will get a £150 gift voucher, to spend online or in-store (when the shops reopen).

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer this question:



LEGO blocks originated in which country?

- a) Finland b) Sweden c) Denmark

ENTER NOW! MARK YOUR ENTRY LEGO

firstnews.co.uk/competitions or see page 21. The closing date is 28 January 2021.

Start the new year with a mesmerising mystery!

Fans of Emma Carroll, Michael Morpurgo and *Goodnight Mister Tom* will love this timeless, unforgettable debut about bravery and brotherhood.



Scan here for downloadable teaching resources



WILEY-BLIND Children's **Book of the Month**

BLOOMSBURY

NINTEND-WOAH!

ACCORDING to a games industry insider, more Nintendo Switch consoles were sold in the UK last year than all other consoles combined!

Christopher Dring, head of the games industry website gamesindustry.biz, tweeted the startling statistic this week. He said that in the UK, through 2020, if you add up the sales of every PS5, PS4, Xbox One and Xbox Series X/S, you get a number that's pretty close to the total number of Nintendo Switch sales!

While he didn't give specific numbers, it's quite easy to imagine this being the case. The Nintendo Switch is cheaper than the next-gen consoles and has a larger library of games that are aimed at all the family. Did you get a Switch last year?



Nintendo



Microsoft

CONTROLLER QUESTIONS

THIS week, the controller that comes with the Xbox Series X/S was in the news for a couple of reasons.

First, Microsoft sent a survey to Xbox gamers, asking if they were "aware of" the features of the PS5's DualSense controller, and if they'd like to see them in the Xbox's controller.

While that doesn't mean changes to the Xbox controller are coming anytime soon, after the Xbox One was released, Microsoft released a new controller featuring a share button and a headphone jack, after being a big hit with PS4 gamers.

It was also widely reported that the only reason Xbox controllers still use batteries is because of an ongoing deal with battery company Duracell. However, Microsoft denied that there is any deal, and said it wanted to give choice to Xbox gamers and that using batteries is just one option.

WALLACE AND GROMIT'S BIG FIX UP!



THE nation's favourite cheese-loving inventor and his loyal canine companion are back in a brand-new augmented reality (AR) adventure!

The free new app, which launched on

Monday, lets you experience an all-new adventure where fans help out Wallace and his faithful hound with their latest business venture: Spick & Spanners. They've been hired to 'fix up' Bristol, but the game can be played in the UK, US and Canada.

Using AR technology, Wallace and Gromit's Bristol can be seen through your phone, similar to Pokémon GO. Help out by completing jobs for the duo, and you'll encounter all sorts of crazy characters, voiced by an all-star British cast.

You'll also end up coming across some of Wallace's past inventions, which might need a bit of a tune-up.

One of the mad machines to make an appearance in the app is the Litteration. The robotic figure – one of over 1,500 entries in a competition run by the Intellectual Property Office and Aardman Studios – was designed by nine-year-old Dominic Marday, and roams the streets while eating, sorting and recycling litter!

This year's Cracking Ideas competition launches soon. Visit www.crackingideas.com to find out more.

To download the new app, head to www.thebigfixup.co.uk.



Aardman/Fixmeers

HOME-SCHOOLING WITH THE FIRST NEWS HOME IHUB



THE First News iHub is an interactive e-learning platform created to support children aged 7-14 to develop key reading, comprehension, writing and oracy skills, while also learning about key news stories from around the world.

With hundreds of activities available, this is a fantastic tool for parents to support their child's learning at school and for home educators.

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AWARD WINNING!

"The iHub has become a regular and popular choice for our 'home-school' during lockdown!"
A Crawford, parent, May 2020

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WIN! NATIONAL PARKS PRESENTATION SETS

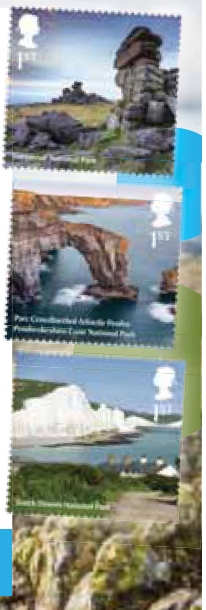
ROYAL Mail has released its first Special Stamps issue of 2021, which celebrates the 70th anniversary of the founding of Britain's first National Parks.

Featuring some of the UK's most popular and visited landscapes, the stamp set features 10 of the 15 National Parks.

The UK's National Parks cover a breathtaking range of natural environments: from cold tundra to temperate rainforest, from gigantic sea cliffs to rolling chalk hills, from razor-sharp mountains to marshy wetlands. They are also places where people have lived, worked, worshipped, farmed and traded for centuries, in ways that have shaped – and been shaped by – the surrounding environment. These landscapes are unique combinations of human culture and natural history.

We have 15 National Parks Presentation Stamp Packs up for grabs. To be in with a chance of winning, just answer this question:

In what year were Britain's first National Parks founded?
a) 1941 b) 1951 c) 1961



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