

A History Lesson: The Making of Teddy Bears

NationalDayClassroom.com

Introduction

Every year on **September 9**, we celebrate **National Teddy Bear Day**! Teddy bears are more than just toys. They are symbols of comfort, friendship, and imagination. But how did teddy bears come to be?

The Origin Story

The story of the teddy bear begins with **President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt** in the early 1900s.

- In **1902**, President Roosevelt was on a hunting trip in Mississippi.
- After a long day, others in the group had caught animals, but Roosevelt had not. To help him, guides captured a small bear cub and tied it to a tree.
- They offered Roosevelt the chance to shoot the bear, but he **refused**, saying it wasn’t sporting or fair.

This moment made headlines across the country. A political cartoon by **Clifford Berryman** showed Roosevelt sparing the little bear.

From Cartoon to Toy

- Inspired by the cartoon, a New York shop owner named **Morris Michtom** and his wife **Rose** made a stuffed bear toy.
- They asked President Roosevelt for permission to call it “**Teddy’s Bear**.”
- The bears quickly became popular, and soon the **Ideal Toy Company** was founded.

At the same time in Germany, toy maker **Richard Steiff** of the Steiff company was designing soft, jointed stuffed bears. When they were shown at the 1903 Leipzig Toy Fair, American buyers fell in love with them.

The Teddy Bear Craze

- By the early 1900s, teddy bears were a worldwide hit.
 - Children carried them everywhere, and toy companies kept improving designs—softer fur, movable arms and legs, different sizes.
 - They became a **comfort toy** for children and even adults.
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Fun Facts

- The first teddy bears looked more like real bears, with long snouts and big paws. Over time, they became rounder and cuter.
 - During both World Wars, teddy bears were given to children for comfort.
 - Today, teddy bears are collectors' items, with some rare Steiff bears selling for thousands of dollars.
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Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think President Roosevelt refused to shoot the bear?
 2. How did newspapers and cartoons help spread the story?
 3. Why do you think teddy bears are still popular today, more than 100 years later?
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Activity Idea

Design Your Own Teddy Bear:

- Give students paper and crayons or markers.
- Ask them to design their own teddy bear with special features (color, clothes, superpowers, or accessories).
- Students can share their bear's name and story with the class.



National Teddy Bear Day Writing Prompt

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Prompt:

Imagine your teddy bear came to life for one day.

- What would your teddy bear's voice sound like?
- What adventures would you go on together?
- Would your bear share any secrets, or would it just want to cuddle?

Write a short story about your day with your teddy bear. Be sure to give your bear a name, a personality, and describe what makes it special.

Checklist for Students

- ✓ Gave your teddy bear a name
- ✓ Described what it looks like
- ✓ Explained its personality (funny, shy, brave, cuddly, etc.)
- ✓ Wrote about one adventure or activity you shared
- ✓ Included how you felt about the experience

