

By Sandie Lee



World's Largest Jigsaw Puzzle - (24,000 pieces measuring 5 feet x 14 feet).

Puzzles come in all sorts of styles. They're also a great way to pass the time and all you need to play is a flat surface to assemble your puzzle on.

A Piece of History

The first puzzle was invented by a teacher in 1767. John Spilsbury had the idea to attach a map of the world to wood and cut out each country. He then asked his students to remake the map. This helpful 'teacher's aid' was the start of a new craze, making geography and history a lot more fun to learn. These puzzles were called 'dissected puzzles,' and didn't interlock. By the 1900's the fretsaw was being used to cut puzzle pieces into zig-zag shapes. It was this technique that gave the puzzle its new name, the Jigsaw.

More Pieces

Puzzles were first thought of as a child's toy, but by the early 1900's adults had joined the fun. The puzzles of these days were extremely challenging. Not only were they expensive to purchase, but the wooden pieces had just one color on them.

Also, they didn't interlock, so any bump, trip or sneeze could mean disaster for all that work. To make matters even worse, the box didn't have a guide picture on it. Sometimes, 'puzzlers' wouldn't know what the picture was until the last piece was in place. By 1929, puzzles took a huge leap. Parker Brothers Company was now manufacturing puzzles with cardboard pieces that interlocked. Even though the Great Depression was underway, puzzles were an affordable past time and even some libraries and drugstores began renting puzzles out. They charged three to ten cents a day, depending on the size.

Puzzling Fun

Puzzles are still popular today. They come as small as 2 chunky pieces for toddlers all the way up to the 'World's Largest Jigsaw Puzzle.' This 24,000 piece puzzle titled, 'Life: The Great Challenge,' was painted by Royce McClure. It's beautifully detailed, depicting life above and below the water, with realistic fish, animals, sailboats and planets. When complete, this puzzle measures five feet by fourteen feet and would be a challenge to even the most serious puzzlers. In fact, challenges are currently going on all over the world. Classrooms, senior centers, families and friends are joining together to see who can put this monster puzzle together the fastest. The 'World's Largest Jigsaw Puzzle' can be seen at www.worldslargestpuzzle.com/hof.html.

So why not fit a puzzle into your day? Piece by piece whether it's small, big or somewhere in between, it's just plain fun.