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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication****Hopper et al.**(10) **Pub. No.: US 2006/0040582 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Feb. 23, 2006**(54) **STORYBOOK PLAYSET****Related U.S. Application Data**

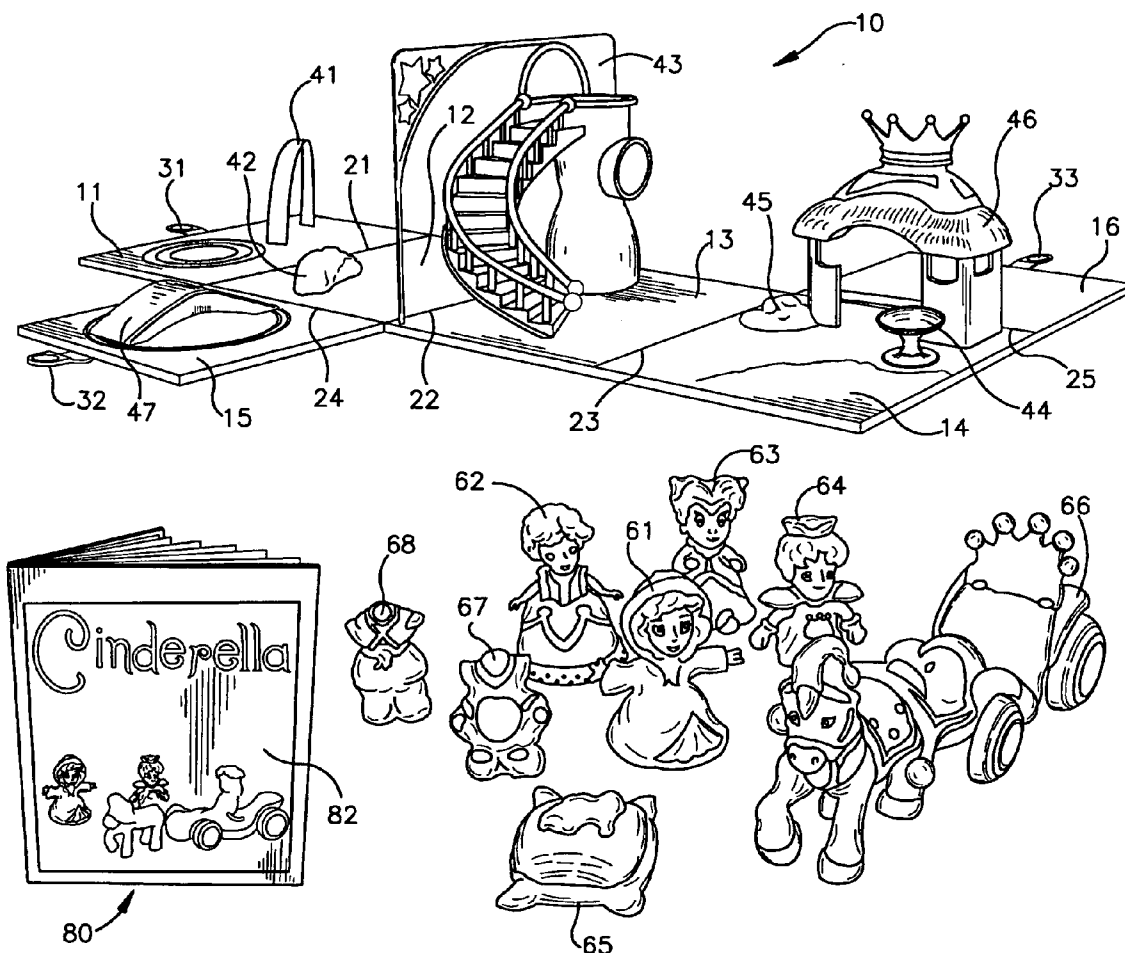
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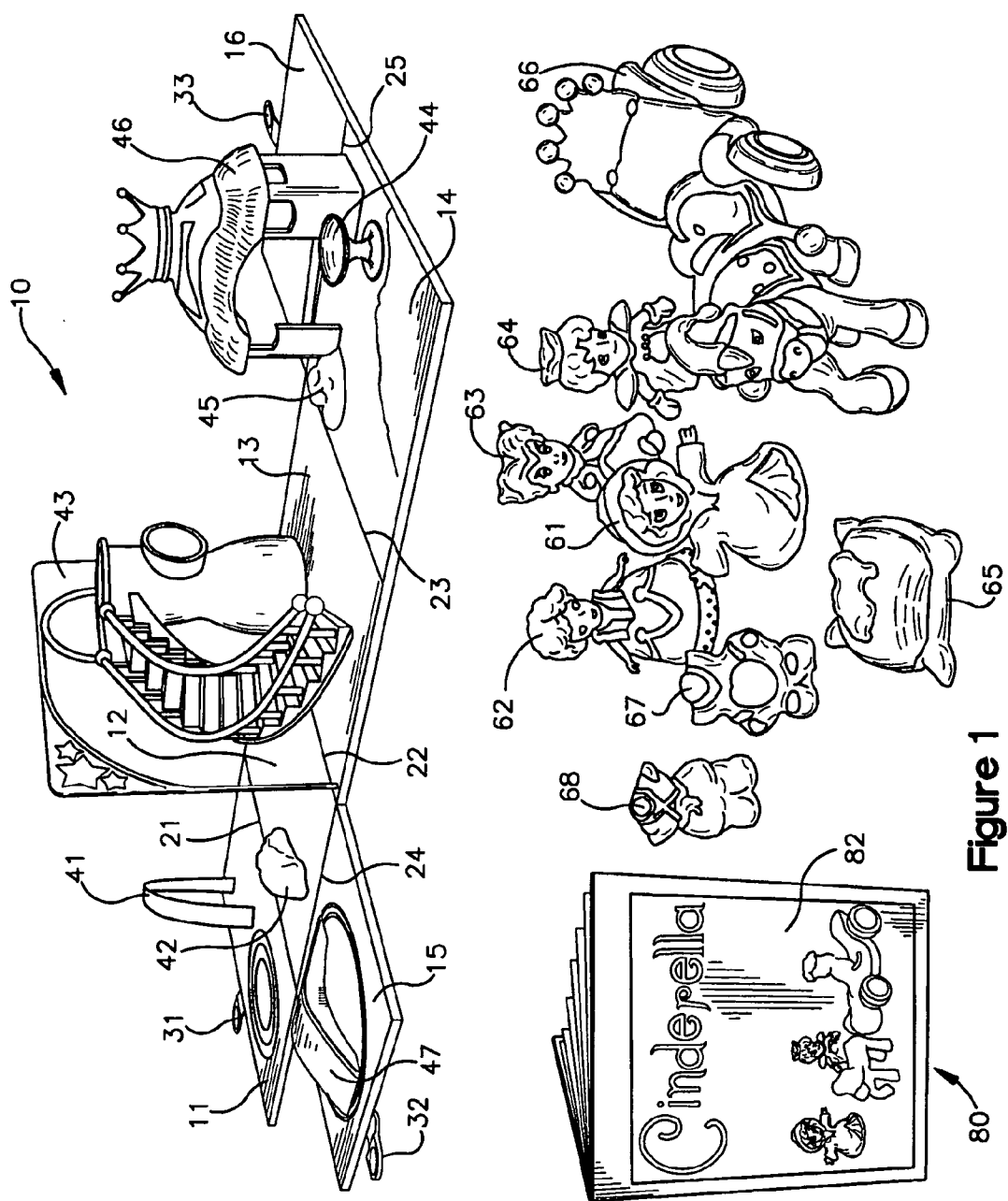
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A63H 3/52 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **446/75; 446/82; 446/478**(57) **ABSTRACT**

A playset (10) comprising a plurality of panels (11-16), attached structures (41-47), unattached structures (61-68), and a storybook (80) telling a certain story theme. The attached structures (41-47) comprise scenery structures corresponding to scenes in the story theme, and the unattached structures (61-68) comprise figurines corresponding to characters in the story theme. The panels (11-16) are hingedly interconnected for conversion between a ready-to-play condition and a storage condition.

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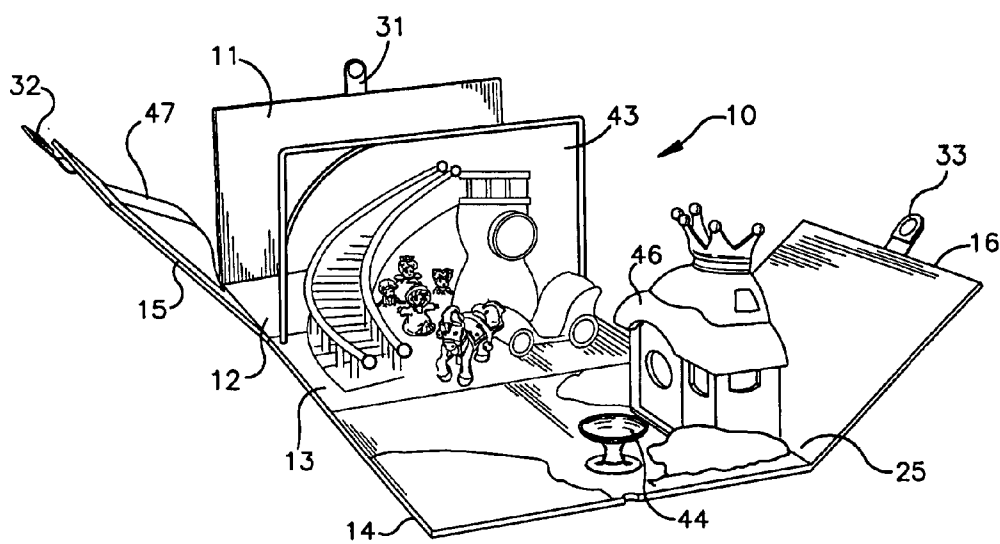


Figure 2

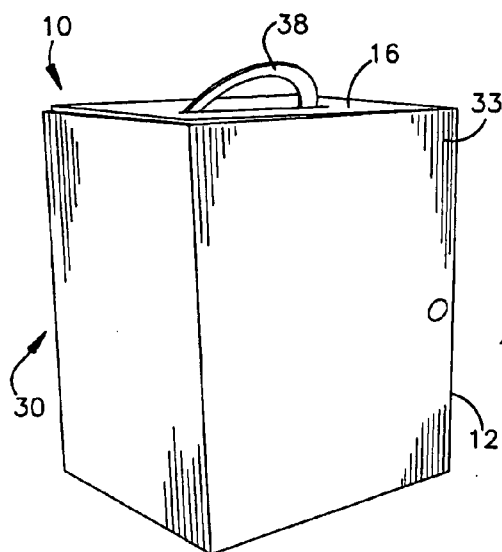


Figure 4

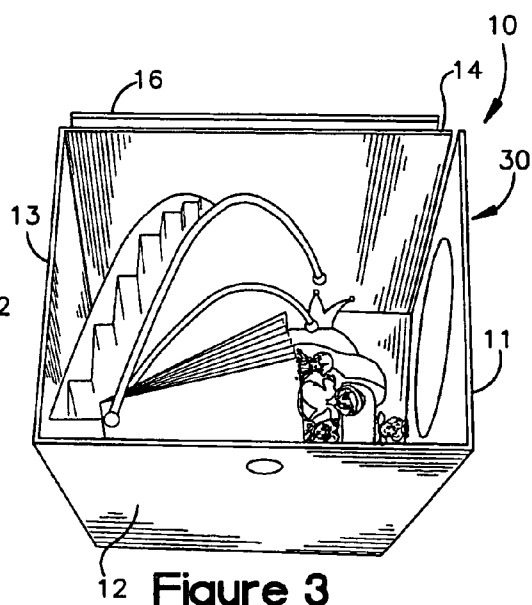


Figure 3

STORYBOOK PLAYSET

RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/602,397 which was filed on Aug. 18, 2004. The entire disclosure of this provisional application is hereby incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates generally, as indicated, to a storybook playset and, more particularly, to a playset which includes a storybook and play structures relating to the storybook.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Literacy, and the love of reading, is strongly encouraged in children, as it is believed to promote proper intellectual development. Children enjoy reading (or being read) storybooks in which the plot entails interesting characters doing unusual things in fascinating places. For example, traditional fairy tales often involve extraordinary beings (e.g., princes, princesses, fairies, etc.) and/or curious creatures (e.g., witches, monsters, beasts, etc.), and they are frequently set in enchanted places (e.g., elaborate castles, magical forests, mysterious towers, etc.). While children enjoy reading such books, their attention span often interrupts the storyline, as their hands become restless from inactivity and their minds become anxious for imaginative play.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention provides a storybook playset which includes scenery structures and play structures that a child can play with, in an interactive and imaginative way, while a story is being told.

[0005] More particularly, the present invention provides a playset comprising a plurality of panels which are hingedly interconnected for conversion between a ready-to-play condition and a storage condition. In the ready-to-play condition, the panels are positioned in the same general plane and can rest upon a flat surface. The playset also includes attached structures extending upward from the panels (when they are in the ready-to-play condition), and unattached play structures.

[0006] The playset can further include a story-telling device (e.g., a book) to convey a certain story theme. The attached structures can comprise scenery structures corresponding to the story's scenes and the play structures can comprise figurines or props corresponding to the story's characters, articles or items. While the story theme is being conveyed (e.g., a parent is reading the book), the child can be acting out the different scenes by moving the play structures about the panels and the scenery props. In this manner, the child's hands are kept busy and his/her mind is engaged in imaginative play while listening to the story.

[0007] When the panels are in the storage condition, they form a container. The attached structures are positioned within the container when the panels are in the storage condition, and the unattached structures may be inserted into the container for storage therein. Thus, the playset provides

a self-storing unit which, if provided with a handle, can be easily carried to a storage or alternate play area.

[0008] These and other features of the invention are fully described and particularly pointed out in the claims. The following description and annexed drawings set forth in detail a certain illustrative embodiment of the invention, this embodiment being indicative of but one of the various ways in which the principles of the invention may be employed.

DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a storybook playset according to the present invention, the playset being shown in a ready-for-play condition.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the storybook playset, as it is being folded into a storage condition.

[0011] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the storybook playset, as it is being folded into the storage condition, with all but a top panel closed.

[0012] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the storybook playset in the storage condition.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0013] Referring now to the drawings, a storybook playset 10 according to the present invention is shown. As is explained in more detail below, the components of the storybook playset 10 are designed to allow interactive play surrounding a certain story theme. In the illustrated embodiment, the story theme is the classic fairy tale, "Cinderella", however other story themes, both fictional and non-fictional, are possible with and contemplated by the present invention.

[0014] The playset 10 comprises a plurality of panels, such as six panels 11-16 which are interconnected by hinges 21-25. The hinged interconnection of the panels 11-16 allows the playset 10 to be converted between the ready-to-play condition shown in FIG. 1 and the storage condition shown in FIG. 4. The conversion is accomplished by folding the panels 11-16 as shown in FIGS. 2 and 3.

[0015] In the ready-to-play condition (FIG. 1), most and preferably all of the panels 11-16 are positioned in the same general plane and can rest upon a flat surface (e.g., a floor or table top). The face of each of the panels 11-16 visible in FIG. 1 may be referred to as its play face and these play faces can include indicia printed or otherwise displayed thereon. The combined play faces can correspond to one scene or setting, or, each panel's play face can correspond to different scene or event in the story line. For example, in the illustrated Cinderella story theme, panels 11, 12 and 15 can correspond to the garden where the Fairy Godmother appears, panel 13 can correspond to the ballroom staircase, and panels 14 and 16 can correspond to the palace entrance and courtyard.

[0016] In the storage condition (FIG. 4), the panels 11-16 are folded to form a container 30 having, in the illustrated embodiment, a rectangular prism shape. Fastening elements 31, 32, and 33, on panels 11, 15, and 16, respectively, can mate with fastening elements (not shown) on other panels to secure the panels 11-16 in the storage condition. The panels' play faces are positioned in the interior of the container 30 and the visible opposite face of each of the panels 11-16 may be referred to as its storage face. A handle 38 may be secured

to the panel 16 at its storage face for easy carrying of the container 30. Preferably, the handle 38 is thin and can be folded flush with the panel's storage face so as to not prevent a flat play surface from being formed when the playset 10 is in its ready-to-play condition. (A recess can be provided in the storage face of the panel 16 to facilitate this flushness.) The container 30 can resemble a storybook, whereby the panels' storage faces can be printed or otherwise provided with indicia to reflect this resemblance.

[0017] Referring now in detail to FIG. 1, the playset 10 additionally comprises scenery props 41-47 attached to the play faces of the panels 11-16 and extending upward therefrom when the playset 10 is in the ready-to-play condition. The scenery props 41-47 correspond to the story theme and the selected scene/setting arrangement. For example, in the illustrated Cinderella playset 10, the scenery props could include an archway 41 and rocks 42 in panels 11 and 12 (the garden), a staircase 43 in panel 13 (the ballroom), a fountain 44, bushes 45, and gateway 46 in panel 14 (the palace entrance and courtyard) and a bridge 47 in panel 15 (the garden).

[0018] The scenery props 41-47 are located and dimensioned so that they are positioned within the container 30 when the panels 11-16 are folded into the storage condition. Specifically, for example, the height of the staircase 43 does not exceed the length of the adjacent panels 12 and 14. The remaining props 41, 42 and 44-47 are sized and positioned to fit within spaces in the staircase 43 when the playset 10 is folded into the storage condition. (See FIG. 4).

[0019] In the illustrated embodiment, all of the scenery props 41-47 remain attached to the respective panels 11-16 in the storage condition. However, it is possible for one or more of the scenery props 41-47, and/or additional scenery props, to be removably attached to one or more of the panels 11-16 in the ready-to-play condition. When converting the playset 10 into the storage condition, these removably attached scenery props could be removed from the panels, and stored inside the container 30.

[0020] The playset 10 also comprises play structures 61-68 which are unattached to the panels 11-16 whereby they can be freely moved by a child during imaginative play. These structures can include character figurines, animal or article props, and costume changes. For example, in the illustrated embodiment, the "character" play structures include a Cinderella figurine 61, a Fairy Godmother figurine 62, a Stepmother figurine 63, and a Prince figurine 64. The "prop" play structures include a pillow 65 (for the glass slipper) and a horse-drawn carriage 66. The "costume" play structures can include a change of clothes 67 and 68 for Cinderella and/or the Prince, which can be snap-fit onto the figurines 61 and 64, respectively. In any event, the play structures 61-68 are shaped and sized to fit within the container 30 when the playset 10 is in its storage condition.

[0021] The playset 10 further comprises a book 80 (or other story-telling device, such as an audio device) which can be attached to one of the panels 11-16 or, as illustrated can be unattached to the panels 11-16. The book 80 includes a cover 81 and pages 82 containing words (and possibly pictures) telling a fictional or non-fictional story. In the illustrated embodiment, the book would tell the classic Cinderella story. The book 80 is preferably dimensioned to fit within the container 30.

[0022] While a parent is reading the book 80 (or the story is otherwise being conveyed), the child can be acting out the different scenes by moving the play structures 61-68 about the panels 11-16 and the scenery props 41-47. In this manner, the child's hands are kept busy and his/her mind is engaged in imaginative play while listening to the story.

[0023] To convert the playset 10 from the ready-to-play condition to the storage condition, the panels 11-16 are appropriately folded (and the fastening elements 31 and 32 connected), thereby positioning the scenery props 41-47 inside the container 30. (See FIGS. 2 and 3.) The play structures 61-68 and the book 80 can be inserted through the still open top of the container 30 (FIG. 3) to be contained therein. The panel 16 is then folded over, and the fastening element 33 connected, to close the container 30. The handle 38 can then be used to easily transport the container 30 (and thus the playset 10) to a storage or alternate play area. It can be noted that, even without the book 80 and/or the common story theme, the playset 10 provides a self-storing unit which can accommodate attached items (e.g. the scenery structures) and which can hold unattached items (e.g. the play structures) in a folded condition.

[0024] Although the invention has been shown and described with respect to certain preferred embodiments, it is evident that equivalent and obvious alterations and modifications will occur to others skilled in the art upon the reading and understanding of this specification.

1. A playset comprising:

- a plurality of panels which are hingedly interconnected for conversion between a ready-to-play condition, whereat the panels are positioned in the same general plane and can rest upon a flat surface, and a storage condition, whereat the panels form a container;

- one or more attached structures attached to, and extending upward from, one or more of the panels when they are in the ready-to-play condition, and positioned inside the container when the panels are in the storage condition; and

- one or more unattached structures, unattached to any of the panels, and storable within the container when the panels are in the storage condition.

- 2. A playset as set forth in claim 1, comprising a plurality of attached structures attached to respective panels, all of the attached structures being positioned inside the container when the panels are in the storage condition.

- 3. A playset as set forth in claim 2, comprising a plurality of unattached structures which are all storable within the container when the panels are in the storage condition.

- 4. A playset as set forth in claim 1, comprising a plurality of unattached structures which are all storable within the container when the panels are in the storage condition.

- 5. A playset as set forth in claim 1, wherein the container has a substantially rectangular prism shape.

- 6. A playset as set forth in claim 1, further comprising fastening elements to selectively secure the panels in the storage condition.

- 7. A playset as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a handle is secured to one of the panels and accessible when the panels are in the storage condition.

- 8. A playset as set forth in claim 7, wherein the handle can be folded substantially flush with a face of the one panel.

9. A playset as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a book which is positionable within the container when the panels are in the storage condition.

10. A playset as set forth in claim 9, wherein the book comprises pages with text telling a story theme and wherein the attached structures and the play structures are related to the story theme.

11. A playset as set forth in claim 10, wherein the attached structures comprise scenery structures corresponding to scenes in the story theme.

12. A playset as set forth in claim 13, wherein the play structures comprise figurines corresponding to characters in the story theme.

13. A playset as set forth in claim 12, wherein the play structures comprise items resembling changes of clothes for the figurines.

14. A playset as set forth in claim 12, wherein the play structures comprise props corresponding to animals, articles or items in the story theme.

15. A playset comprising:

a plurality of panels which are hingedly interconnected for conversion between a ready-to-play condition, whereat the panels are positioned in the same general plane and can rest upon a flat surface, and a storage condition, whereat the panels form a container;

one or more attached structures attached to, and extending upwardly from, one or more of the panels when they are in the ready-to-play condition, and being positioned inside the container when the panels are in the storage condition;

one or more play structures, unattached to any of the panels, and storable within the container when the panels are in the storage condition; and

a story-telling device which can convey a story theme;

wherein the attached structure(s) comprise one or more scenery structures corresponding to one or more scenes in the story theme, and wherein the play structure(s) comprise one or more figurines corresponding to one or more characters in the story theme.

16. A playset as set forth in claim 15, wherein the story-telling device is a book comprising pages which contain text telling the story theme.

17. A playset as set forth in claim 16, wherein the container has a substantially rectangular prism shape.

18. A playset as set forth in claim 17, further comprising a handle is secured to one of the panels and accessible when the panels are in the storage condition.

19. A method of telling a story with the playset of claim 15, said method comprising the steps of:

converting the plurality of panels from the storage condition to the ready-to-play condition whereby the scenery structure(s) extend upward from the panel(s);

conveying the story theme from the story-telling device; and

moving the play structures to act out the story theme.

20. A method as set forth in claim 19, wherein the story-telling device is a storybook and the conveying step comprises reading text from pages of the storybook.

21. A method as set forth in claim 19, further comprising the steps of:

converting the panels from the ready-to-play condition to the storage condition whereat they form the container; and

placing the unattached play structures in the container.

22. A playset comprising:

a plurality of panels which are hingedly interconnected for conversion between a ready-to-play condition, whereat the panels are positioned in the same general plane and can rest upon a flat surface, and a storage condition, whereat the panels form a container;

a story-telling device which can convey a story theme;

one or more scenery structures, corresponding to one or more scenes in the story theme, attached to, and extending upward from, one or more of the panels when they are in the ready-to-play condition, and attached to the panels and positioned inside the container when the panels are in the storage condition.

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