

More than Marbles:

What I Learned from Shooting Little Glass Balls

Ana Maria Magalhaes

BEFORE YOU READ: Have you ever played marbles? If so, what did you like about it?

Gorgeous Glass Balls

As a child, marbles was my favorite game for many reasons. I remember when I saw a glassy transparent marble for the first time; I fell in love with it. Some marbles had tiny balls inside that reminded me of the universe made up of stars and planets. Others had gorgeous solid bright colors. Others had multicolored stripes inside, and others had a solid colorful core. The marbles were beautiful.

Practice Makes Perfect

I learned to play marbles by seeing my brothers playing, and I played by myself at home after school. I folded my thumb, and ringed my fingers into my palm. I rolled my pointer finger around the marble holding it against my thumb, and pushed my thumb out making the marble go so



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fast and far. With practice, I also learned to have good aim.

On Saturday afternoons, my brothers and I got together with the kids from my neighborhood for the marble tournaments. I remember the sound of our laughter and our loud voices full of excitement while we walked to the field. Across the street from my home was a small, flat piece of land made of red dirt. We made a circle in the dirt using a piece of wood. We placed a big marble in the center and counted 20 steps out from the circle. Then we made a line to determine where the competitors would stand to shoot. We had a rule that if somebody crossed the line, he would be eliminated from the game for cheating. The winner was the person who could hit the big marble in the center of the circle, and the prize was keeping all the marbles that were inside the circle. I used to win most of the tournaments because of my practice during the week.

Learning from Marbles

I stored my marbles in empty cans in my room. They were my precious treasure. After my broth-

ers asked me to lend them some marbles, I learned that I could use them for trading. I lent marbles to the other kids and got extra marbles as interest, or I received cartoons, books, or magazines in exchange.

Marbles was a fun game that helped me build my self-esteem. I was the only girl among the big boys to secure a place as a competitor, and I was proud of that. Playing marbles helped me to

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understand and deal with many kinds of feelings, such as frustration when I lost, happiness when I won, fear when big boys wanted to take my marbles from me, and courage to stand up for my rights to get my

prize when I won. I also learned how to put myself in someone else's shoes. Sometimes, I gave marbles to kids who didn't have any way to pay me back. I could relate to them because I always felt sad when I wanted to play but didn't have money to buy marbles.

Lessons Still Serving Me Today!

In my life, I have faced many challenging situations. I know how to stand up for myself because I learned to overcome similar situations when I was a kid playing with marbles. I remember once I had to talk to a boss about a pay raise and better working conditions. By the end of the meeting, I got a promotion because I stood up for my rights. Playing marbles was a kind of training for the challenges I would face in my adult life. It not only brought me many fun moments, but it also taught me important life lessons.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Why is the article called, "More than Marbles"?
2. What are some of the lessons Ana learned from her experience playing marbles as a child?
3. Review the underlined words and learn their meaning.



Ana Maria Magalhaes is from Brasilia, Brazil, and her first language is Portuguese. She is in an Even Start program at RIRAL in Woonsocket, RI. She got her GED in 2009, but she is still taking classes to improve her English skills. She works as a bookkeeper.

How Are Marbles Made?

Marbles are made from glass. What is glass made from? Believe it or not, glass is made from sand that is heated to an incredibly high temperature, at which point it turns into a liquid. Read more about it here: <www.explainthatstuff.com/glass.html>. And watch a video about how marbles are made here: <tinyurl.com/makemarbles>. What questions do you have about the science behind glass marbles?