The History Of The Barbie Doll Essay, Research Paper

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The idea of Barbie all started in 1959 when Ruth Handler, Barbie s creator, noticed her daughter Barbara playing with paper dolls and imagining them in grown up roles such as college students, cheerleaders, and adults with careers. Ruth realized that dolls on the market at that time were all baby dolls, and that there was a need for a doll that would inspire little girls to think about what they wanted to be when they grew up. Thus the idea for the Barbie doll, the teenage fashion model, was born. Ruth named the doll Barbie, after her daughter and now, 40 years later, this 1.9 billion-dollar-a-year industry is stronger then ever.

The Barbie doll started being released in early 1960. It first appeared in the now-famous black and white striped swimsuit and signature ponytail. After producing this doll and one other know as Roman Holiday, she began to be made with lighter blue eyes and a new type of vinyl that retains its flesh-tone color rather than whitening with age.

One year after her introduction, number five was released. She was made with different hair colors, one of which was a shade of red known as titian, and with a new Bubble Cut hairstyle popularized by Jacqueline Kennedy. Enchanted Evening, a lovely pink stain gown, also debuted this year. This fashion was a collector s favorite and was reproduced in 1996. Ken, Barbie s boyfriend was introduced this year with short blonde or brown hair, blue eyes, and moveable head, arms, and legs. He was also a + inch taller then Barbie. Ken was named after Ruth s son, Kenny. Barbie doll was now the hottest selling fashion doll on the market at this time.

In 1962, Barbie doll was still being made with a ponytail, but the Bubble Cut was much more popular and was produced in much greater numbers. Red was her color this year and Red Flare, a bright red coat, hat, and handbag ensemble made a bold fashion statement. Garden Party and Tennis Anyone were two of Barbie doll s other fashions that year. Also that year, the fuzzy-haired Ken doll was retired in favor of a new doll with the painted brown or blonde hair.

In the next two years of Barbie s life a lot happened. In 1963, she came out as Fashion Queen Barbie, with 3 interchangeable wigs: platinum Bubble Cut, a brunette Pageboy, and a titian side-swept ponytail called a Swirl. This was also the year that Barbie got her first and best friend, Midge. This freckled doll was a favorite for many collectors. In 1964, Barbie doll appeared in a pink swimsuit with eyes that open and close. This was the only Barbie doll to have eyes that shut. Barbie doll’s family also began to grow that year with the introduction of Skipper, Barbie doll’s little sister.

By the end of the decade Barbie had changed even more. Her and her friends were given more bendable legs. Her new hairstyle was known as American Girl . 1967 gave her a more youthful face and long straight hair to keep up with the changing times. A talking Barbie was finally introduced in 1968. This was a long time dream of Ruth s husband, Elliot.

By the beginning of 1970 Barbie s fashion trends were up-to-the-minute. She had designs reflecting the prairie look, the granny dress, the California girl suntan craze, and glittery disco styles. Barbie turned sweet 16 in 1974 and a portion of Times Square was renamed Barbie Boulevard for a week in her honor. In 1976, Barbie doll s face was again reshaped into a wider smile and sun-streaked hair reflecting the latest beauty looks. Also in 1976 Barbie dolls were placed in time capsules and sealed during the Bicentennial celebrations to be opened in 2076 as the favorite doll of this century. Barbie was featured in Life Magazine in 1979 as reflecting twenty years of American fashion.

During the 70s, Barbie doll had a constantly changing wardrobe that swung from the mod look of Live Action Barbie, a wild multi-colored pants outfit, to the high fashion of City Sophisticate. Her wardrobe also reflected an international flavor in Picture Pretty Barbie from Canada and Party Time Barbie from Germany.

In the 1980 s fans held the first annual Barbie doll

convention. The first black and Hispanic Barbie dolls were then introduced as Teresa and Christie. Barbie doll s wardrobe began to grow larger with both glamorous and casual looks such as the Dolls of the World Collection. In 1986 the first porcelain Barbie was introduced. Two years later, in 1988 the first Holiday Barbie debuted and Barbie s best friend Midge returned. Mattel then celebrated Barbie s thirtieth anniversary in 1989 with Pink Jubilee Barbie.

Staring in 1990, Barbie doll stepped into the future allowing girls to use their computer to, among other things, design and print their own fashions with CD-ROM products. One of the first Barbie software products, Barbie Fashion Designer , was the best selling software title of 1996, followed by Barbie Magic Hairstyler , the top new children s title in 1997. She entered the digital world in 1998 with the Barbie Photo Designer Digital Camera and CD-ROM. Most recently, the Barbie doll went online with My Design, which allows customers to go online to customize and order their own Barbie doll friend. Barbie doll also started becoming more involved in a little girl s life with a flexible new body allowing her to be more

active as a gymnast, bicyclist, and skater. In 1992 the first Barbie doll store opened at FAO Schwarz in New York City. Barbie soon was made to be the first women president candidate. Mattel celebrated Barbie s thirty-fifth Anniversary in 1994 with a re-issue of the very first doll and the Limited Edition Gold Jubilee Barbie.

In the 1990s, the wardrobe for Barbie reached new heights of elegance and drama. She wore astonishing originals designed for her by Christian Dior, Bob Mackie, and Ralph Lauren as well as the glittering Starlight Dance ensemble. In a classic-like suit, City-Style Barbie took on a sophisticated look, perfect for the time. Also during this era, the Barbie Millicent Roberts Collection of fashions was introduced.

Family and friends hold a very important place in the history of Barbie. Besides Ken, Barbie also had a best friend, Midge, who was introduced in 1963 but returned in 1968. Barbie s little sister Skipper, introduced in 1964, Sister Stacie, introduced in 1992, and baby Kelly, new in 1995 are also all very popular. She also has friends from a variety of backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the

real world. In 1968, Barbie doll s black friend Christie was first introduced, in 1988 Teresa, a Hispanic doll came, and in 1990 Kira, an Asian friend, debuted. In 1997 Share a Smile Becky, Barbie s friend in a wheelchair was introduced for the first time. Barbie s circle of friends also includes others such as: Francie, Tutti, Todd, Stacy, P.J., Jamie, Cara, Kelley, Steffie, Tracy, Miko, Whitney, Diva, Dee Dee, Dana, Steven, Kayla, Devon, Nia, Belinda, Bopsy, and Steven. Many of these are now retired due to the fact that they were part of a series.

Barbie fans of all ages can also enjoy the line of special edition and limited edition dolls designed specifically with the collector in mind. Exquisite fashions designed by Nolan Miller, re-creations from Barbie doll s early years, and Barbie and Ken as characters from popular files such as The X-Files, are helping the world of Barbie Collectibles grow. The value of older dolls is rising as more and more adults discover the world of Barbie.

In conclusion, Barbie still reflects the dreams, hopes, and future realities of an entire generation of little girls who still see her as representing the same American dream and aspirations as when she was first introduced in 1959.