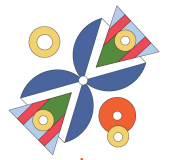


# Play Theorists

Playful Learning Resource



A Playful Teacher Education Resource

## Theorist: Vivian Gussin Paley



- ▷ **Who is this theorist?**
  - ▽ Vivian Gussin Paley was an early childhood teacher, writer, and teacher researcher
- ▷ **Where/when did they live and work?**
  - ▽ She lived and taught in Chicago, U.S. 1929-2019
  - ▽ Her teaching was conducted at the University of Chicago Lab School, where she taught preschool and kindergarten for many years.
- ▷ **What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?**
  - ▽ Paley's theory is that fantasy play and storytelling are vital to young children's development, and that storytelling and fantasy play can significantly impact children's social and academic growth and development.
  - ▽ Paley developed an approach known as Storytelling and Story Acting, in which children dictate stories of their choosing and then act out the stories together with their classmates.
  - ▽ In developing her theory and conducting her research, Paley acted as a teacher-researcher, collecting audio recordings and written transcripts of play episodes and conversations with children in her classroom, and then reflecting on this data to inform her writing.
- ▷ **Where can I learn more?**
  - ▽ By reading Paley's books about play in the early childhood classroom, including:
    - You Can't Say You Can't Play (1993)
    - The Boy Who Would be a Helicopter (1991)
    - The Girl with the Brown Crayon (1997)
    - A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play (2004)

## Theorist: Jean Piaget

### ▷ Who is this theorist?

- ▽ Jean William Fritz Piaget, a psychologist and philosopher, is well known for his cognitive development theory.

### ▷ Where/when did they live and work?

- ▽ He lived in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. 1896-1980.
- ▽ He taught in the fields of psychology, sociology, and philosophy of science at the University of Geneva after developing his famous theory of cognitive development.

### ▷ What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?

- ▽ Play as assimilation – children use play to organize their understandings of the world
- ▽ He worked on the stages of cognitive development by observing the children's actions and he believed that play helps children to digest mentally and to understand personal experiences.
- ▽ His understanding of play indicates that as a child matures, their environment and play should assist them to develop their cognitive and language skills.
- ▽ He categorized children's play into four types; functional play, constructive play, symbolic/fantasy play, and games with rules.
- ▽ Piaget believed that play is more than just a way for children to show their interest. Play also has one more purpose in resolving and overcoming conflict situations and negative feelings in children.

### ▷ Where can I learn more?

- ▽ Play, Dreams and Imagination in Childhoods (1962)
- ▽ The Construction of Reality in The Child (1954)
- ▽ Play and Development (1972)
- ▽ The Child's Conception of the World (1967)



## Theorist: Lev Vygotsky

### ▷ Who is this theorist?

- ▽ Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, is a Russian psychologist, who is best known for his Sociocultural Theory.

### ▷ Where/when did they live and work?

- ▽ He was born in Orsha, Russian Empire. 1896-1934.
- ▽ He worked at Moscow's Institute of Psychology

### ▷ What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?

- ▽ Play as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
- ▽ He believed that the ZPD is created through play and children could operate at their highest possible cognitive level in play.
- ▽ He stressed the importance of the social nature of learning through play.
- ▽ The creation of imaginary situations, pretend play, is the central element of Vygotsky's theory.
- ▽ Vygotsky's play theory differs from other play theories because he focused on children's dramatic or make-believe play which includes some components such as creating an imaginary situation, taking on and acting out roles, and following a set of rules.
- ▽ He also believed that language is the greatest tool to learn, and children have introduced to learn language through play.

### ▷ Where can I learn more?

- ▽ Mind in Society (1978)
- ▽ Thought and Language (1934)
- ▽ Play and Its Role in The Mental Development of the Child (1933)
- ▽ Imagination and Creativity in Childhood (1927)



## Theorist: Gregory Bateson

▷ **Who is this theorist?**

- ▽ Gregory Bateson was an English anthropologist, social scientist, and linguist.

▷ **Where/when did they live and work?**

- ▽ He was born in Grantchester, U.K. 1904-1980.
- ▽ He taught at different universities such as the University of Sydney, Saybrook University, and the University of California.

▷ **What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?**

- ▽ Play frames – events in play relate to real world
- ▽ Bateson's attempt to understand play and conceptual frames was greatly influenced by his psychotherapy technique.
- ▽ According to him, play is an exploratory behavior that allows to try out potentially dangerous situations without taking extreme risks.
- ▽ He suggests that play itself creates its own frame, which establishes a context in which certain behaviors.

▷ **Where can I learn more?**

- ▽ Steps to an Ecology of Mind (1972)
- ▽ Mind and Nature (1979)
- ▽ A theory of play and fantasy (1955)



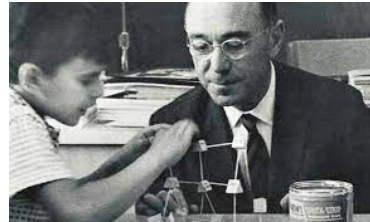
## Theorist: Jerome Bruner

▷ **Who is this theorist?**

- ▽ Jerome Seymour Bruner was an American psychologist and educator who worked on cognitive psychology.

▷ **Where/when did they live and work?**

- ▽ He lived in New York, U.S. 1915-2016.
- ▽ He began his academic career as a psychology professor at Harvard University and later retired from New York University Law School.



▷ **What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?**

- ▽ Play as a way to practice and learn problem-solving strategies.
- ▽ According to him, play provides an opportunity for children to take risks without fearing of failure.
- ▽ He believed that learning is an active process and play creates an environment for children to explore and experiment.
- ▽ His theory suggests that play allows us to modify the environment according to our desires, whereas learning allows us to better transform ourselves in order to fit the world's structure.
- ▽ He believed in the social nature of learning in which adults should be involved in the learning.

▷ **Where can I learn more?**

- ▽ Play, Thought, and Language (1983)
- ▽ The process of education (1960)
- ▽ Play: Its Role in Development and Evolution (1985)

## Theorist: Mildred Parten

### ▷ Who is this theorist?

- ▽ Mildred Bernice Parten Newhall was an American sociologist who is known for her stages of play.

### ▷ Where/when did they live and work?

- ▽ Parten lived in Minneapolis, U.S. 1904 -1970.
- ▽ She completed her doctoral dissertation in 1929 and she developed the theory of six stages of play in her dissertation by observing children's free play.
- ▽ She worked as a researcher at the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota.



### ▷ What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?

- ▽ Parten identified six stages of play (unoccupied, solitary, onlooker, parallel, associated, cooperative play) that children pass through.
- ▽ Parten tried to explain how children interact with each other and a model of socialization skills during play in her stages of play theory.
- ▽ Children move from unoccupied to cooperative play stages one by one from birth to middle childhood.
- ▽ According to Parten's theory, adults (parents and teachers) observe mostly parallel and associative play during toddler years.
- ▽ The association is more important than the play activity itself in associative and cooperative play which is the most sophisticated form of play.

### ▷ Where can I learn more?

- ▽ Social play among preschool children (1933)
- ▽ Social Behavior of Preschool Children (1943)
- ▽ Family income and expenditure in four urban communities of the Pacific Northwest (1939)

## Theorist: Tina Bruce

### ▷ Who is this theorist?

- ▽ Tina Bruce is an Honorary Professor of Early Childhood Education and a theorist in the area of play-based learning in early childhood education.

### ▷ Where/when did they live and work?

- ▽ Bruce was born in 1947, U.K.
- ▽ Tina Bruce is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Roehampton. She is also a co-founding director of the Centre for Early Childhood Studies at the Froebel College, Trustee of the Froebel Trust.



### ▷ What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?

- ▽ She introduced 12 features of play relating to the quality of play, rather than believing that play progresses through stages or sequences.
- ▽ Instead of believing that children learn through play, she claimed that children use it to practice what they have previously learned and to test their ideas.
- ▽ In 12 features of play, she suggests important features of play such as first-hand experiences, making rules, making and adapting play props, playing cooperatively, pretending, having personal agenda, coordinating ideas, and testing recently acquired skills.
- ▽ Bruce claims that adults should facilitate play but not be responsible for it. Children should be provided a free-flowing form of play.

### ▷ Where can I learn more?

- ▽ Time to Play in Early Childhood Education (1991)
- ▽ Learning Through Play: For Babies, Toddlers, and Young Children (2011)
- ▽ Helping Young Children to Learn Through Play (2001)
- ▽ Quality of Play in Early Childhood Education (1996)

## Theorist: Helle Marie Skovbjerg

### ▷ Who is this theorist?

- ▽ Helle Marie Skovbjerg is Denmark's first professor in play and a part of Design School Kolding's, in collaboration with the LEGO Foundation.

### ▷ Where/when did they live and work?

- ▽ Skovbjerg was born in Denmark.
- ▽ She introduced the idea of Play Moods which aim to capture that special way of being when you play.



### ▷ What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?

- ▽ She developed the idea of play moods; devotion, intensity, tension, and euphoria.
- ▽ In a devotional mood, there is no hardness in the body, only attention and focus, and the body is frequently quiet or moving slowly.
- ▽ The intensity of play mood refers to extreme physical play situations, such as swinging, sliding, and riding a rollercoaster.
- ▽ The third type of play mood is the tension which is defined by being ready to show yourself while also being aware of others.
- ▽ The euphoria is the last type of play mood, which is characterized by an expectation of silliness. This type of play mood is also the most open-minded mood because of constantly seeking new meanings.

### ▷ Where can I learn more?

- ▽ Playful learning, space and materiality: An integrative literature review (2022)
- ▽ Play Tarot Cards: A method to explore play qualities in teaching using playful approaches (2022)
- ▽ Supporting Play Pedagogy in Schools (2021)
- ▽ Designing for Play Moods in a Ludatorium (2020)
- ▽ The Future of Play (2020)



## Theorist: William Corsaro

### ▷ Who is this theorist?

- ▽ William Corsaro is a social psychologist who developed the idea of peer culture and play talks by investigating children's interactions with peers and adults in schools and families.

### ▷ Where/when did they live and work?

- ▽ Corsaro was born in 1948, in Indianapolis, U.S.
- ▽ He was a Professor of Sociology at Indiana University, Bloomington and he has taught many courses on childhood socialization and childhood and society.



### ▷ What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?

- ▽ Corsaro defines children's peer culture as a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with each other.
- ▽ Two fundamental elements emerge from his study of children's peer cultures: children make continual attempts to take control of their life and to share that power with each other.
- ▽ According to Corsaro, children are always engaged in and a part of two cultures: children's and adults', and both cultures are intricately intertwined in many ways.
- ▽ He stated that children did play alone or engaged in parallel play rarely because they were soon doing things together.

### ▷ Where can I learn more?

- ▽ We're Friends, Right? Inside Kids' Culture (2003)
- ▽ The Sociology of Childhood (2017)
- ▽ Spontaneous Play and Social Learning in the Nursery School (1980)
- ▽ Peer Play and Socialization in Two Cultures: Implications for Research and Practice (1991)

## Theorist: Kathy Hirsh-Pasek

- ▷ **Who is this theorist?**
- ▷ Kathy Hirsh-Pasek is a U.S. psychologist whose research focuses on learning through play and guided play.
- ▷ **Where/when did they live and work?**
  - ▽ At Temple University in Philadelphia, PA, USA. She is also a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.
- ▷ **What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?**
  - ▽ Hirsh-Pasek and colleagues' research demonstrates the power of learning through play for young children. They have found that play supports learning across domains
  - ▽ The concept of guided play has been elaborated by Hirsh-Pasek and colleagues. In guided play, children take the lead, while an adult facilitates the learning experience by scaffolding with language, materials, and questions.
  - ▽ Hirsh-Pasek's work has contributed to advocacy efforts to increase play and playful learning for children within and beyond school contexts.
- ▷ **Where can I learn more?**
  - ▽ Hirsh-Pasek's website has links to many of her published research and reports: <https://kathyhirshpasek.com/play/>



## Theorist: Add your own!

- ▷ **Who is this theorist?**
  - ▽ Add here
- ▷ **Where/when did they live and work?**
  - ▽ Add here
- ▷ **What is their theory about play? What implications does this have for education?**
  - ▽ Add a short paragraph here
- ▷ **Where can I learn more?**
  - ▽ Link to a resource

