

## What's in the box?

The long standing argument among collectors is, "Does a box really add to the value?" Some staunch opponents say, "No." They claim it is the item itself that retains the value, and the box is not relevant. It is their opinion that the box is optional, and should bear little to no impact on the price of the collectable piece. It is a selfish opinion at that. (Though true some people just don't care about the box.) Such a standing is most likely based on the desire of the owner/seller to value their piece for more than the worth without a box. True it becomes a space problem, but the original box is often the best container for storage or shipping of the item. Boxes are easy to tote and stack, loose valuables are not.

Remember, we are not talking about boxes for something like a lamp, but focusing on toys. The package box normally has wonderfully detailed graphics depicting the item inside, or a scene akin to the item. It is meant to attract buyers, and possibly double for display purposes. Toys with an original box fetches a heftier price. And M.I.B. (Mint In Box) fetch even more. M.I.M.B. (Mint In Mint Box) are rare prizes that send bidding for collectable toys into the stratosphere. There is nothing like having that historic antique out of time in its original box.

"How much value does the box add to my item?" There are obvious factors like supply/demand, condition of the box, and are reproductions available? Some boxes are difficult to reproduce. Reproduction boxes will increase the value of your item by a minimum of price paid. Perhaps more if it is really significant to the item, like a Monopoly game box. Nothing restores your item to full value like an original box. Even with a missing flap, or torn graphics it sometimes fetches a fair price. "Antiques Road Show" aired an old tin toy valued at \$1000. But it also had the much rarer box valued at \$2000 alone!

"Is it easy to make a repro box?" Obtaining original artwork and printing process from the manufacturer is near impossible. Repro boxes are normally made from scans of an original. It is often difficult to find a box that has survived well enough to make a decent reproduction. They are often touched up and original artwork may be simulated if it is missing. (Sometimes the whole box is redone by an artist from scratch.) If the colors were dirty and "re-inked" after scanning, the nuance of the aged colors may be lost. Resulting in a box that looks too new for the aged toy. It is flat and lifeless. Even the best scans are merely simulations of color not discernable to the human eye, and are not solid ink colors.

"Can I get my original box repaired?" Not usually. However, I do offer the unique service of replacement parts for the boxes I carry. This restores your box closer to full value. It has the added benefit of not giving you another box to store. When restoring, "Do no harm." "Is it worth repairing?" Ask yourself, "How obvious or significant is the damage?" Bank policy of mutilated currency is, "3/5ths of the bill must be intact, or it is valueless." This includes tears, missing pieces or graphics torn from the surface. Light scratches are often repairable with a suitable magic marker. Be careful with color matching and not to color outside the scratch. It can be more of a distraction than the original damage.

"Why so much money for reproduction box?" Basically, they are not common and hard to find. They are often reproduced by skilled people with a vested interest in the collectable. Someone spends time and money having one made professionally, and thus available only through collectors, or toy shows. It is surprisingly difficult to get a straight hi-rez scan. They also seem scaled to the price of the original collectable. Ex: One web site carries a repro box of the original 1950's "Robby the Robot" for \$75. The toy itself is often in the mid to high hundreds, or more. Naturally, almost no one wants to pay that kind of price for a toy in the very low hundreds. Which is probably the reason why so many boxes aren't available. People don't know where to find them, and financial recompense is difficult.

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