

From Celebrities to Politicians, Labubu Dolls Go Viral

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. **Themes** (noun) /θi:mz/: The subjects or main ideas in a talk, piece of writing, or work of art.
Example: The new art exhibition explored several environmental **themes**.
2. **Gambling** (noun) /'gæmblɪŋ/: The activity of playing games of chance for money or betting on races, etc.
Example: Some people find the **gambling** aspect of blind boxes exciting.
3. **Conceived** (verb) /kən'si:vd/: Formed (a plan or idea) in the mind.
Example: The architect **conceived** a new design for the building.
4. **Phenomenon** (noun) /fɪ'nɒmɪnən/: A fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause or explanation is in question.
Example: The rapid spread of online gaming is a global **phenomenon**.
5. **Contributed** (verb) /kən'trɪbjʊ:tɪd/: Gave (something, especially money or time) in order to help achieve or provide something.
Example: Her hard work greatly **contributed** to the team's success.



Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP) aimed to capture the attention of young voters prior to the country's general election in early May. They actively engaged with social media, collaborated with influencers, featured party members on podcasts — and unveiled a Labubu doll adorned in the party uniform.

Labubu is a distinctive monster character, featuring large eyes and ears, sharp teeth, and a very wide smile. With her furry body, she strikingly resembles a rabbit with a noticeably human-like face. These unique toys have rapidly gone viral, celebrated for their ability to be both ugly and cute simultaneously.

The character is an integral part of "The Monsters" range from the Chinese company Pop Mart. Pop Mart frequently releases sets of these toys with various themes. For instance, in the recent "Big Into Energy" series, the dolls come in diverse colors, each representing concepts such as love, happiness, and luck.

However, each 17-centimeter-tall toy is sold in a "blind box." This means that purchasers do not know precisely which specific doll they are acquiring before opening it. Collectors assert that this element of gambling significantly adds to the toys' overall appeal.

While there is a 1 in 6 probability of finding each of the six standard "Big Into Energy" toys, the chance of discovering the "secret edition" doll, which boasts rainbow eyes and teeth, is much rarer, at only 1 in 72. Despite these varying rarities, all dolls maintain the same price, with one box costing \$28.

Labubu was conceived by artist Kasing Lung, who was born in Hong Kong but relocated to the Netherlands during his childhood. Lung originally designed Labubu in 2015 for a series of picture books. The toys themselves were released in 2019, but it is only recently that they have become a widespread phenomenon — even gaining the attention of celebrity fans. In April, K-pop star Lisa from Blackpink expressed her affection for the doll to *Teen Vogue*, stating, "Labubu is my baby." International stars like Rihanna and Dua Lipa have also been seen with these popular figures. As for the PAP in Singapore, the party ultimately won its general election — though the extent to which Labubu contributed to their success remains unconfirmed.

DISCUSSION

1. Labubu dolls are "ugly and cute" at the same time! If you could invent a new toy that was a mix of two opposite feelings (like "happy and grumpy" or "fast and slow"), what would it be called and what would it look like?
2. Labubu is a monster with a wide smile and sharp teeth. If Labubu had a superpower linked to its unique looks, what would it be? Could it scare away bad dreams or give super-happy smiles?
3. The toys come in "blind boxes," making it a gamble. If you bought a blind box that promised a "magical item," what's the weirdest or most surprising magical item you hope to find inside?
4. There's a rare "secret edition" Labubu with rainbow eyes. If you found a secret edition of anything (like a special snack or a unique school supply), how would you react, and what special power would it have?
5. Labubu was designed by an artist. If you could design a new toy that becomes super famous, what would it be, and what funny story would it tell?

6. Celebrities like Lisa, Rihanna, and Dua Lipa love Labubu. If you could give a Labubu doll to any famous person, who would it be, and what kind of tiny outfit would you dress it in for them?
7. The PAP used Labubu to get attention for an election. If a school club wanted to get more members, what unexpected and funny mascot or item would they use to attract people?
8. Pop Mart releases sets of toys with different themes. If you designed a new Labubu series based on a dream you had, what would the theme be, and what would the dolls look like?
9. Labubu looks like a rabbit with a human face. If you could combine any two animals into a new silly creature, what would they be, and what would it be called?
10. The article mentions "lifetime learning." If Labubu could learn a new skill every year, what kind of amazing or hilarious skill do you think it would learn by the time it's 20 years old?