# It started with a toy ...

**We all know that Transformers are cars that change into robots. But when and where did the idea start?**

## Robot or truck?

In 1984 the toymakers, Hasbro, introduced their new toys – cars, trucks and jets which changed into robots. The idea for these toys came from Japan. Robots were already popular toys there.

Hasbro immediately liked the idea and they gave each robot a personality. Writers wrote a story for each toy. The story was about the planet Cybertron. Hasbro called the toys 'Transformers'.

Early Transformers toys
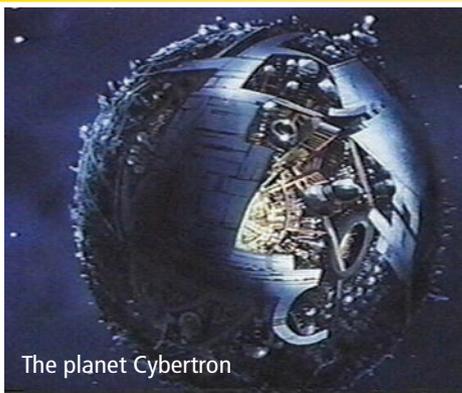
## Here to stay

Children loved the new toys and they also loved the stories. They really cared about their robots. The Transformers were here to stay. 300 million toys later, they are one of the most popular toys of all time.

The planet Cybertron

## Books, TV and film

But the story of the Transformers did not stop at the toys. Over the next twenty years there were comic books and TV shows. In 1986 there was a film – *Transformers: The Movie*. The latest film in 2007 introduced new teenagers to the world of the Transformers. Where does the story go from here?

## Prime fact

In the 1986 film *Transformers: The Movie*, Optimus Prime dies. Many people were not happy about this!

**Q:** How long does it take to design a new Transformers toy and get it into the shops?

**A:** More than two years.

**What do you think?**
What toys did you play with when you were a child? What was your favourite toy? Why did you like it?

**Do you know these words?**
You can use a dictionary.
introduce   toy/s   popular
personality   TV show/s   design

# TRANSFORMERS

The 2007 film *Transformers* was a big hit, thanks to some famous names and some new young stars. Let's meet them …

**Steven Spielberg** was one of the producers of the film. He loved the idea of a Transformers film. Years ago he bought the toys – not for his children, but for him! But this film is not only about the robots. For Spielberg, this film is really about 'a boy and his car'.

**Michael Bay** was the director of the film. He is famous for his action films. There are many stunts in the film – only the robots are computer-generated. The film was expensive to make – $150 million – but it was a big hit and MTV's best film in 2008.

## Did you know?

In the comic books, Bumblebee was a yellow Volkswagen Beetle, but in the film he changes into a Chevrolet Camaro.
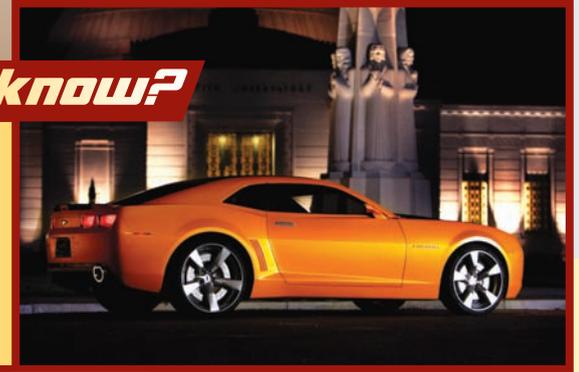
**Shia Laboeuf** (Sam Witwicky) was born in 1986 in Los Angeles, USA. As a boy, Shia loved the Transformers toys – so he was very happy to play Sam. In the film he did his own stunts. *Transformers* was one of Shia's first films. He is now a very busy young star. In 2008 he starred in Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.

**Megan Fox** (Mikaela Banes) was also born in 1986, in Tennessee, USA. Megan moved to Florida when she was 10. She started acting when she was 13. Before *Transformers*, Megan was a television star. In the film she did a lot of running. When she met Michael Bay, he had one important question for her: 'Can you run fast?'

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**What do you think?**
Who are your favourite film stars?
What films are they in?

**What do these words mean?**
You can use a dictionary.
producer   toy/s   director   action
stunt/s   computer-generated   acting

# Robot World

**Say the word 'robot' and most people think of films like *Transformers* and *Star Wars*. But there are many working robots in the world today ...**

Robots can visit dangerous places that people cannot. Scientists are developing robots which can go to the Arctic. Robots can also go to other planets. The first of these robots was the *Sojourner Rover*. It went to Mars in 1997.

Sojourner Rover
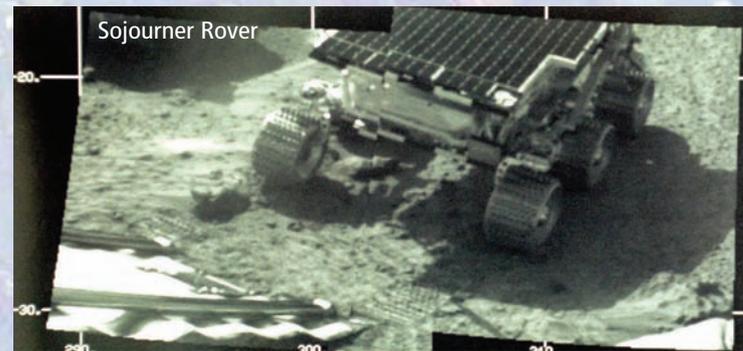
When people visit the Honda building in Tokyo, a robot meets them. The robot's name is Asimo and it is 130 cm tall. It can talk, walk and climb stairs. The robot can answer to its name and knows about 10 different faces. Honda scientists worked for 20 years to develop Asimo. In the future, scientists may use robots like Asimo to care for people, or do dangerous jobs such as fighting fires.

Asimo

Robots can do some jobs faster and better than people. There are many robots in factories. Car factories often use big robot arms to make cars.

Some robots can already play chess better than people. Other robots can 'read' people's faces – they 'know' when people are angry or happy. But are robots ever going to have their own thoughts? And what are they going to think about us?

**What do you think?**
**Is it important to develop new robots?**
**What jobs would you like a robot to do?**

**What do these words mean?**
**You can use a dictionary.**
**factory / factories     dangerous**
**scientist/s     develop     chess**

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