



# Labubu Mania: The Ugly-Cute Toy Fueling a Global Craze

## Warm-up

1. What's the most unusual or expensive item you've ever collected or been tempted to collect? Why?
2. Why do you think certain toys or products suddenly become global trends?
3. Have you ever bought something just because it was popular online or on social media? What was it, and do you regret it?

## Vocabulary

1 Match the words with their definitions.

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Elusive          | A. A person who buys items to sell them again, often at a higher price   |
| 2. Frenzy           | B. Something that spreads quickly and widely, especially on social media |
| 3. Indulgence       | C. Strong excitement or wild behaviour, often seen in groups             |
| 4. Reseller         | D. Easy to reach or afford for most people                               |
| 5. Accessible       | E. A temporary comfort or pleasure that people allow themselves          |
| 6. Viral            | F. Surrounded or overcrowded by a large number of people                 |
| 7. Emotional relief | G. Difficult to find, catch, or define clearly                           |
| 8. Sceptic          | H. A feeling of comfort or release from stress                           |
| 9. Mobbed           | I. Someone who doubts or questions the truth or value of something       |
| 10. In the loop     | J. Being informed and up-to-date about something                         |

2 Create a short story using the pictures below and the vocabulary (pictures below).



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## Reading

Read the story and complete it with the following words:

bat / wild / teeth / hands / belongs / obsessed / trend / comfort / enough / frenzy  
/ loop / seen / social media / inflation / eyebrows / afford / bizarre / accessible /  
spending / lighthearted

It has 1. .... -like ears, a mischievous grin full of sharp 2. ...., and  
a face that looks both creepy and endearing, and it's driving people 3.  
..... Meet Labubu, a designer toy by Hong Kong's Pop Mart that has  
taken the world by storm.

Labubu 4. .... to a collectible series called The Monsters, and while it's  
been around for a while, its sudden rise to global fame in 2024 is thanks to one  
powerful force: 5. .... TikTok and Instagram were soon flooded  
with viral videos of Labubu dolls dancing, lip-syncing, or embarking on absurd  
adventures. The internet couldn't get 6. ....

What followed was a 7. .... Pop Mart stores were mobbed, with fans  
queuing for hours and sometimes days. Some travelled long distances, crossing  
countries just to get their 8. .... on the elusive toy. Resellers joined the  
party too, listing dolls for sky-high prices.

But what makes people so 9. .... with this quirky creature?  
Psychologists suggest that Labubu offers a kind of "emotional relief" in difficult  
times. In a world shaken by 10. .... and economic uncertainty, small  
indulgences, like an odd-looking toy, provide 11. .... Unlike luxury goods,  
Labubu feels 12. .... (at least before resellers hike up prices). It's also  
a way to participate in a collective 13. ...., especially appealing to  
younger generations who spend much of their lives online.



Yet, some are beginning to raise 14. .... Is this really about the toy or about the thrill of buying, collecting, and being “in the 15. ....”? Critics argue that the Labubu craze reflects a deeper issue: the power of viral culture to spark unnecessary 16. .... In an era when many struggle to 17. .... essentials, dropping hundreds on a 10-centimetre plastic figure feels... questionable.

Still, the tone of criticism is often 18. .... Even sceptics admit Labubu is “kind of adorable in a weird way.” For many, it’s just another chapter in the long history of 19. .... trends, from Beanie Babies to fidget spinners. Whether Labubu becomes a lasting icon or fades like many viral fads remains to be 20. .... But for now, this toothy little monster has captured the hearts and wallets of people around the world.

## True or False

Are the sentences true or false?

1. Labubu’s popularity started in 2020 due to global toy fairs.
2. The toy is part of a collection called The Monsters.
3. Social media platforms like TikTok helped make Labubu famous.
4. Fans often wait for a few minutes to get the toy in stores.
5. Some people travel to different countries to find Labubu.
6. Labubu is seen as a luxurious, exclusive item like designer handbags.
7. The toy gives emotional comfort during tough economic times.
8. Critics say the craze might reflect impulsive spending habits.
9. Most critics believe Labubu is dangerous for young children.
10. The article suggests that Labubu’s popularity may eventually fade.

## Discussion

1. What psychological or emotional needs do you think collectibles fulfil?
2. Why do you think people are drawn to “ugly-cute” designs like Labubu?
3. How does social media influence what people want to buy?
4. Do you believe resellers help or harm collectible markets?
5. Would you ever queue for hours (or travel far) to get a trending item? Why or why not?
6. How do you distinguish between a fun trend and mindless consumerism?
7. What are some viral products you’ve seen fade away quickly?
8. In your opinion, is it wrong to spend lots of money on collectibles during economic hardship?
9. Have you ever felt pressure to buy something just to fit in or feel included?
10. Should people be more critical of viral consumer trends? Why or why not?

