

# Chamber Pot

## 1 INTRODUCE



### What is this object called?

A chamber pot.

### What job did this object do?

People went to the toilet in it at night before internal flushing toilets.

### What objects today do the same job? Flushing toilets



## 2 INVESTIGATE



Let the children examine the Chamber Pot.

## 3 DESIGN/MATERIALS



### What is this object made out of? Enamel

### Why is enamel a good material to make the chamber pot out of?

Enamel is waterproof and won't leak and is easy to clean.

### Why is it shaped like a pot? It is easy to carry

Is it portable? Yes.

## 4 HOW DID IT WORK?



### How did it work?

The chamber pot sat under the bed at night and when people needed to go to the toilet they would pull the pot out, do their business in the pot, then push it back under the bed. In the morning they would empty it.

### Who used it?

Everyone, but in particular old or sick people who couldn't go to the toilet out the back.

**Have you ever used a Chamber Pot or something similar?** Yes. When you were little and learning to use the toilet you probably used a 'potty', which is a bit like a chamber pot.



## 5 LEARN MORE...SAY...

Chamber pots got their name because they look like pots and were used in the bedroom or bedchamber. They have been used for centuries and would have been used by your grandparents and their parents. Most of your parents would not have used one; instead they would have used the indoor flushing toilet. Before indoor flushing toilets people had to go to the toilet in the thunderbox which was down the back yard.

The thunderbox was simply a big tin under a toilet seat. When people went to the toilet they could not flush the contents away like we do today and it got quite smelly (think camping toilets), which is why it was a long way from the house. Going to the backyard thunderbox at night, especially in winter or when it was raining, could be a very unpleasant experience, so people preferred to use a chamber pot instead. Using the chamber pot did have its hazards. It was not uncommon for people to trip while carrying a full pot or step into a full pot that hadn't been pushed under the bed properly after it had been used.



## 6 COMPARE IT TO TECHNOLOGIES TODAY

**How is the chamber pot different from flushing toilets which we use today?** Chamber pots need to be emptied, have no seat and no lid...although some did have one. However they are portable.

**Do people still use chamber pots today? If so when?** A type of chamber pot called a bed pan is sometimes used by old people in nursing homes or people who are very sick and can't move very far.



## 7 THINK

**What does this item tell us about life in the past?** Towns did not always have sewerage systems and houses did not always have indoor flushing toilets. People needed to find other ways to dispose of their waste.

**How would your life be different if you had to use a chamber pot at night instead of a flushing toilet?**