

Emma Putland

University of Nottingham, UK.

Email: [Emma.Putland@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Emma.Putland@nottingham.ac.uk)

## **Reading Relationships, Worlds and Reality: A Multimodal Analysis of LEGO® City and LEGO® Friends' Homepages.**

### **Abstract**

*Existing literature highlights the gendered worlds of children's toys, LEGO® City and Friends included, which target boys and girls respectively. The current article critically examines City and Friends' homepages, since these act as a concise introduction to their online and offline spheres. I am particularly interested in how the two homepages differently summarise the sets and represent "reality" for users; by this, I refer to the toys' relationship with users' real-life existences, both regarding the modality of their represented worlds and how users are encouraged to interact with the toy. Analysis indicates that, although both explicitly position themselves as toys to be used in viewers' worlds, Friends and City present disparate realities and relationships with users. Friends promotes both real-life and imaginary friendship for consumers through interacting with its girl friendship group, whereas City emphasises action-oriented relationships where users are elevated to a heroic status in the imaginary city. I show how these relationships are realised through different semiotic resources, including visual modalities, linguistic choices and website format. I consider the intricacies of their semiotic choices and conclude by discussing the potential implications of these choices for shaping how children interact with and emotionally engage with the toys.*

**KEYWORDS: MODALITY, LEGO® TOY, MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (MCDA), WEBPAGES**

## **1 Introduction**

As the top global toy brand at the time of writing (Statista 2018), LEGO is a leading player in the world's toy industry and of children's experiences of material culture. Approximately five billion hours are spent playing with LEGO® bricks by children across the world annually (National Geographic 2011), a figure that ignores the many more hours spent watching LEGO® films and videos, playing LEGO® games and browsing LEGO® websites. The opportunities that LEGO offers for play are tremendous, with franchises ranging from those in conjunction with other companies' brands, such as DC and Marvel superheroes, Powerpuff Girls, Jurassic Park and Disney, to LEGO's own creations, including Elves, Ninjago, Creator, Friends and City (LEGO 2018a). The latter two franchises, which target girls and boys respectively, are the focus of this study.

LEGO has invested a great deal into appealing to girls separately to boys (see Black, Tomlinson and Korobkova 2016), and Friends was introduced in 2011 after the company conducted four years of research with thousands of girls and mothers (notably boys and fathers were not mentioned) (LEGO 2011). Existing research indicates that these LEGO® toy designs and associated narratives (e.g. packaging, videos and online games) currently promote gendered identities and types of play (Black et al. 2016; Carrington and Dowdall 2013; Reich, Black and Foliaki 2018). Recent qualitative and quantitative content (and some discourse) analyses expose key differences between LEGO's Friends and City sets, online games and promotional materials. Friends sets have been found to orientate around socialising with mainly female characters, beauty and appearance, enjoying leisure activities, nurturing and helping other characters, whilst City follows an 'action' theme, with mainly male professional characters facing dangerous and highly pressured situations (Black et al. 2016; Reich et al. 2018). Overall, the toys and their surrounding texts (e.g. the packaging and online games) position male consumers and characters 'as having agency, independence, and expertise as they engage in impactful employment and activities', whilst 'both female consumers and characters are positioned as occupying primarily passive, ornamental roles as they have fun, socialize, and care for others' (Reich et al. 2018:289).

Research, then, has already provided valuable insights into how the physical toy itself, its digital counterparts and packaging, establish distinct worlds and roles for boys versus girls that draw upon and perpetuate traditional Western gendered stereotypes. It must be noted that LEGO has attempted to address criticism of its gendered representations, including by introducing well-received lines such as female scientists (de Castella 2014), and removing some of the more stereotypical Friends items like the explicitly beauty oriented Heartlake Hair Salon (LEGO 2018f). The present study is interested in how this materialises in LEGO's homepages, since these act as a summary of the overall franchises' themes and reputations. Subsequently, the present article examines firstly, how LEGO summarises its franchises on its homepage in relation to these gendered discourses (since such a small online space necessitates the foregrounding and backgrounding/exclusion of particular aspects), and secondly, how these discourses may interact with the representation of "reality" for boy and girl consumers.

## **2 Playing with Gender**

The gender division exhibited by LEGO® Friends and City reflects the toy industry and society more broadly. Repeatedly, construction and action sets are positioned as male, and domestic, caregiving and beauty products as female, reinforcing the association of physicality and agency with masculine identities, and ornamental and nurturing roles with femininity (Berk 2009; Blakemore and Centers 2005). Overwhelmingly, interactional roles and social relationships are depicted differently according to gender. Notably, in online as well as physical games and toys, boys are much more likely to be placed as leaders, for whom physical and mental abilities are

essential, whilst girls are passivised, even belittled, and told to value their physical appearance (rather than capabilities) (e.g. Black, Korobkova and Epler 2014; Reich et al. 2018; Talbot 1995).

Especially pertinent to this study is that close, supportive social relationships are traditionally portrayed as the defining feature of girlhood but not of boyhood (Aapola, Gonick and Harris 2005). The same is true across the lifespan. Masculine talk is traditionally depicted as more “competitive”, with speakers vying for the conversational floor and to achieve social dominance, and feminine talk as “cooperative”, with greater support of other speakers throughout (e.g. Coates 1993, 2016; Diamond 2016; Goodwin 1980; Gray 1992; Tannen 1990). Equally, whilst masculine talk is regarded as more formulaic, often orientating around “male” concerns (such as politics and sports), feminine talk has been evaluated as concerned with relationships, self-disclosure and appearance (Cameron 1997; Coates 1993; Goodwin 1980). These are problematic yet popular stereotypes, and appear time and again across popular media, including children’s toys.

Patterns such as these are important, since as manufactured products, toys are imbued with the values, attitudes and expectations of their producers, and present which cultural practices, activities and roles are ‘possible, acceptable and valuable in a given community’ (Black, et al. 2014:268). Characters that consumers are intended to identify with model how children should act and who they should aspire to be, although this does not necessarily predict children’s play (see Wohlwend 2009; Van Leeuwen 2009). Children are both ‘agentive and unwittingly acted upon’ in their engagement with material culture (Talbot 1995:146); they actively appropriate social texts and their messages into their play, identities and lives (Black et al. 2014; Corsaro 2018) and by the age of three, most children are familiar with the unwritten gender rules conveyed through material culture (Paoletti 2012). Toy representations then, greatly inform and influence children’s lives, identities and emotional, cognitive, physical and social development (Berk 2009; Carrington and Dowdall 2013; Cook 2004; Corsaro 2018; Reich et al. 2018; Wohlwend 2009).

### **3 Toying with (Multi)modality**

Beyond gender divisions, it is useful to consider concepts of borders more broadly, since as is touched upon above, boundaries between toys’ imaginary worlds and users’ identities and relationships outside of them are consistently, and intricately, blurred. Following research into user positioning in online games (Black et al. 2014) and with physical toys such as guns (Machin and Van Leeuwen 2009), this study interrogates how brands try to position their toys in relation to consumers and their real-life worlds when marketing them online. More specifically, I compare how two LEGO® franchises, which are both set in a city, engage with reality on their homepages, according to whether they target boys (LEGO® City) or girls (LEGO® Friends).

Realism is an interesting concept for these sets. Indeed, City explicitly claims ‘LEGO® City is a *realistic* LEGO world for your child to explore and stimulate their *creativity*’ (LEGO 2019a; my emphasis). How realistic is this world? Imagination and realism both influence these sets’ world representations. For example, despite being grounded in the everyday inhabitants, buildings and social systems of (American and/or European) cities, the sets frequently use non-naturalistic colouring and shapes (explored further below). They also extend beyond city locations and structures, with mining, jungle, and Artic exploration sets for City, and treehouses, ski resorts and a fire station converted into five girls’ ‘Friendship House’ for Friends (LEGO 2018b, 2018c).

Throughout this study, I am interested less in the ‘real’ (i.e. the physical toy sets) and more in what is ‘represented as if real’ (for instance, whether characters of the toys are represented as pieces of a larger set, much like the building bricks, or as distinct personalities

with three-dimensional lives and attributes) (Ravelli and Van Leeuwen 2018:293). It is for the latter issue where questions of modality, and if/how this may interact with gendered discourses, are integral. Since modality is such a fundamental component of this study, it is useful to first define it, and then outline some proposed standards for evaluating modality that I will be referring to throughout.

By ‘modality’, I refer to a central concept in social semiotic analyses of multimodal texts, which is concerned with how reliable a message is presented as and evaluated to be (see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; Machin and Mayr 2012; Ravelli and Van Leeuwen 2018). Modality is concerned not with ‘how real a representation “is”’ (Ravelli and Van Leeuwen 2018:282), but with ‘whether a given “proposition” (visual, verbal or otherwise) is represented as true or not’ (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006:155, my emphasis). Verbally, this is exemplified by the distinction between saying that “Sasha ate the apple” and that “Sasha *might have* eaten the apple”; regardless of whether this is the case, the first represents the claim as definite, whilst the latter incorporates doubt regarding whether the claim is true. Visually, texts such as images can be represented as more or less than real, and can make different claims to truth according to their context – for instance, an unedited photo may have a more naturalistic truth since it looks closest to what would be seen with the human eye, whilst a line diagram of the human body may provide more detail and so scientific truth than a photo, and a painting greater sensory truth (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:158; Machin and Mayr 2012:13). Evidently, especially for visual texts, modality is interactional and social, since it relies upon producers’ and consumers’ perceptions of reliability, which vary according to the social group and communicative context (Ravelli and Van Leeuwen 2018:282).

Nonetheless, referring to a set of standard markers of visual modality (e.g. colour) provides a useful basis for analysis. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006)’s seminal work remains the key point of reference for this. They propose eight markers of visual modality (159-163), all of which lie on a continuum, and can be broadly grouped into colour (saturation, differentiation and modulation), detail (contextualization, representation and depth) and light (illumination and brightness):

1) Colour

- a. Saturation (a scale ranging from full colour saturation to no colour, namely black and white)
- b. Differentiation (ranging from monochrome to the whole colour spectrum)
- c. Modulation (ranging from a flat colour with no tonal variation, to many shades of the same colour)

2) Detail

- a. Contextualization (ranging from having no background to a fully articulated and detailed background)
- b. Representation (how detailed an image is; ranging from minimal detail, to the level of detail seen with the human eye, to a maximum level of detail, e.g. with an extreme close-up)
- c. Depth (ranging from no depth, to a human-eye level depth, to a ‘more than real’ ‘fish-eye’ perspective)

3) Light

- a. Illumination (ranging from none to a full representation of the play of light, including shadows)
- b. Brightness (ranging from light to dark, and minimal to maximum contrast between colours)

These modality markers must be considered in relation to values of what actually ‘counts as “real”’ for a given context (Ravelli and Van Leeuwen 2018:283). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) name these ‘coding orientations’, since they greatly inform how texts are

coded by a particular social group (165). An (aesthetic) photorealism tends to be the standard by which as a society we judge realism, whereby naturalism is the dominant coding orientation (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). As such, moderate colour saturation, differentiation and detail, natural modulation, illumination and brightness, and full contextualization produce a high (naturalistic) modality (Ravelli and Van Leeuwen 2018:283). However, children's toys also refer to sensory coding orientations, since they are concerned more with emotional and sensory experiences. Subsequently, they frequently use highly saturated and unmodulated colours that are 'more than real' by naturalistic standards, but which demonstrate a higher sensory modality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:165), since they 'connote increased emotions and exuberance' (Ledin and Machin 2018:50). As such, interrogating modality offers rich opportunities for further examining representations of the world(s) and relationships, here between LEGO® toys and their girl and boy users.

## **4 Methodology**

### **4.1 Data**

LEGO® Friends and City were evaluated as the most comparable sets for this analysis because both are financially successful ranges (LEGO 2017), are oriented around city life, and target similar age-groups (having similar ratios of sets for 3-5, 6-8, 9-11 and 12+ age ranges; LEGO 2019a, 2019b). The franchises' homepages were selected for three key reasons: (1) as the online introductions to the websites, it is likely that the LEGO sets' core intended attributes will be represented through their lexical and visual choices, and indeed, this paper is interested in what was selected for each online franchise summary (LEGO 2018d, 2018e). (2) Homepages provide a small but socially significant dataset that is well-suited to in-depth analysis, as, being the first port of call for many visitors, these pages are particularly likely to receive a high proportion of Lego.com's online traffic (on average 15 million visits per month, lasting only 3 minutes and 47 seconds: SimilarWeb 2019). (3) Homepages are interactive platforms, making them an important source of user engagement with the franchises, and therefore useful for analysing constructions of product-consumer relationships. Screenshots of the homepages were taken in March 2018 and therefore reflect the homepage designs at that time. Due to copyright, an artist's impressions of the homepages are provided here (see Appendices 1 and 2), and the 2018 websites in their original form can also be accessed using Internet archives such as the Wayback Machine.

### **4.2 Multimodal critical discourse analysis**

This study takes a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) approach to the data, as I am concerned with how the linguistic and visual semiotic modes of these homepages both reflect, and help construct, social life through the (gendered) discourses presented to children (Fairclough 2010; Machin and Mayr 2012). As the name suggests, this is the multimodal branch of critical discourse analysis (CDA), an approach that subsumes a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives, tied together by some key common concerns. Notably, CDA focuses on naturally occurring language and its contexts (Wodak and Meyer 2009:2) to investigate how 'ideologies' and 'relations of power are established, maintained, enacted and transformed' through social discourses (Fairclough 2010:26), in the hope of contributing to socio-political change (Machin and Mayr 2012). Taking a *multimodal* CDA approach (specifically, a social semiotic one), recognises that it is not only linguistic but other semiotic forms, such as auditory and visual texts, that can represent the world, construct social relationships and express attitudes towards who, or what, is being represented, making them powerful conveyors of social meaning (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:41-43). As such, analysis

can incorporate music, sculptures, architecture and interior design, packaging, documents, PowerPoint and so on (Ledin and Machin 2018). Attending to multiple semiotic modes can reveal different, even conflicting, messages, especially if some modes of communication meet less resistance than others (frequently visual messages are accepted more readily than words: Messaris and Abraham 2001:225). MCDA is therefore useful for analysing how messages are conveyed on websites, both linguistically and through ‘extra-linguistic features such as typeface, color, and images’ (Alvin 2016:105).

MCDA is not without criticism, particularly that it is ‘too selective, partial and qualitative’ (Machin and Mayr 2012:208). Indeed, in focusing on small-scale data, my analysis cannot be assumed to be representative of all LEGO marketing, although it offers a detailed insight into an example of such marketing. My interpretations are grounded in my personal worldview (inevitably affected, for example, by being a British female; see Widdowson 1998), and I cannot be sure of how LEGO, or its different consumers, would interpret these websites; for instance, as Koller (2008) highlights for the colour pink, individuals’ associations and interpretations can vary greatly. Yet, sharing Sunderland and Litosseliti’s recognition that ‘*no* approach is, can or even should be objective’ (2008:3; authors’ emphasis), I advocate that MCDA provides valuable insights into how social ideologies and (power) relations *can* be realised both at, and below, the surface level of communication.

### **4.3 Conducting analysis**

During analysis, I approached the data in terms of key visual and linguistic semiotic features, notably social actors/participants (considering features such as appearance, body language, camera angle and distance), material processes, settings, homepage layout and colour (for further discussion see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002, 2006; Machin and Mayr 2012; Per Ledin and Machin 2018).

In order to keep the sample size minimal for a detailed analysis of the franchise summaries that could be experienced in a short visit to the site, only visual and linguistic items on the homepage (including pictures accessed by pressing arrow buttons) were included. Video thumbnails were analysed as images, and the videos themselves (including audio, structural and visual features) were excluded from analysis. For the same reason, the other pages that the homepages linked to were also excluded.

The homepages were analysed simultaneously by comparing pre-determined semiotic features in relation to my research questions. For example, all visual representations of participants were grouped according to features such as their gaze and compared across both franchises. The same occurred for linguistic representations of participants, with tables created for different terms of address (nouns, pronouns etc.). Verbs and verb phrases were collated for material processes, as were visual indexes of actions. Visual and linguistic indicators of place were similarly compared, and the homepage layouts were analysed in terms of overall structure and specific components (e.g. image to text ratio, types of images, menu formatting and interactive opportunities). I incorporated an element of flexibility into my analytical framework in order to allow for more spontaneous findings; here, visual modality emerged as a particular point of interest across the two homepages and subsequently became integral to my analysis.

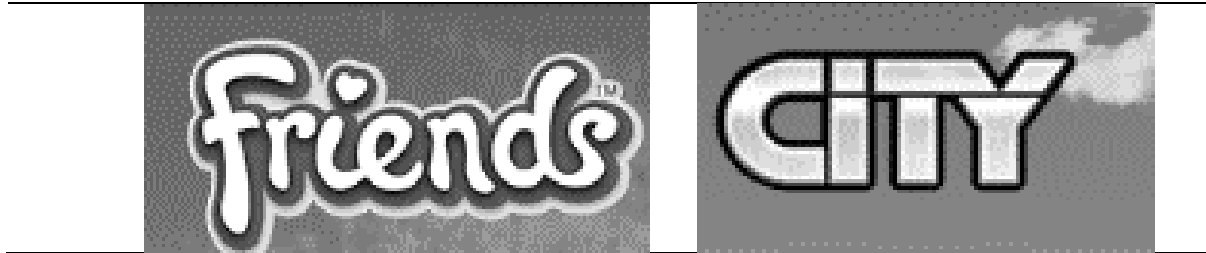
## **5 Analysis**

### **5.1 Constructing (gendered) worlds**

Neither of the LEGO® City or Friends homepages claim linguistically to be for boys or girls. Indeed, both use gender neutral second person pronouns ‘you’ and ‘we’ to synthetically personalise their communication (whereby viewers are “‘handled” en masse as an individual’;

Fairclough 1989:62) so that theoretically, consumers could be anyone. However, visually and thematically, the sites are coded as being for boys and girls respectively. This occurs through font style (Friends' curvy font indexing femininity, and City's block font masculinity; see Figure 1, Table 1,1a), the provision of female figures by Friends and male by City (the exception being a female police officer in City's video thumbnail), and through colour-coding Friends as pink-purple and City as blue, which index femininity and masculinity in (most) Western cultures. Visually, City is for boys and Friends for girls.

**Figure 1.** A comparison of the titles of the Lego Friends and City homepages. © Lego Group 2019. Screenshots reproduced according to Lego's guidelines for reproduction of their materials in non-commercial work.



Conceptually, both toys share the same level of realism, being set in American and/or European cities. However, the homepages present very different worlds. These largely reflect the overall franchises' themes, of heroism, action and professional employment (City) and friendship, leisure and fun (Friends), which are themselves frequently gendered play themes (Black et al. 2016; Reich et al. 2018). Neither realistically represent a city; whereas Friends' Heartlake City is a sanitised sphere of "niceness" and affluence, City's city is a site of simplified conflict within the professional adult world. Linguistically, LEGO® City is presented as 'in trouble' and full of 'problems', and therefore in need of a 'hero' (users). The same is true visually, including in what aspects of the set are displayed. Police headquarters, jail escapes, car chases, bear attacks, mining and monster trucks are visually showcased as experiences of the city above other City sets; for instance, public transport (trains, planes and buses), hospitals and a pizza truck are all excluded from the homepage (LEGO 2018c). Subsequently, City appears a highly dangerous world of conflict between the police and criminals, rather than a productive civilisation with a variety of public services, areas and amenities. The opposite is true of Friends. Heartlake City is situated as the five named characters' 'home' (Andrea, Emma, Mia, Olivia and Stephanie), with all aspects orienting around their lives (e.g. the art stand is known as 'Emma's Art Stand'). Visually promoted buildings and facilities include Stephanie, Mia and Olivia's bedrooms, the friends' Friendship House, a hotdog stand Andrea works at and Mia's campervan, whilst 'houses, shops, playgrounds, hotels', school and swimming pools are linguistically foregrounded. Besides endorsing an affluent experience of the world, such sets present domesticity (e.g. bedrooms), part-time work (hot-dog stand), hobbies (e.g. art, sport), consumerist-driven recreation (shops, cafes, hotels) and caring for pets as constituting the girls' everyday worlds. Friends is a (middle class) citizens' world with a mixture of fun and everyday responsibilities, and City a world of heroes fighting crime.

Notably, despite being identified as a key theme of Friends (Reich et al. 2018), beauty is excluded from the site's franchise descriptions and featured sets, which may reflect LEGO's response to widespread critique by removing explicitly beauty-oriented sets (LEGO 2018f). Nonetheless, comparing how the characters and worlds are represented highlights that beauty remains more significant in Friends. Whereas City characters have the "blocky" physique and

simplistic, non-naturalistic features (e.g. monotone yellow skin and no nose) of the traditional LEGO® figure, Friends’ featured characters are computer generated to visually fit numerous hegemonic feminine beauty ideals. They all have long hair and large eyes (with what appears to be eye-shadow and eye-liner), most of them wear skirts, there are no indicators of disabilities, only one wears glasses and they are slim but have feminine curves, presenting a narrow type of feminine identity that excludes many body shapes, styles and abilities. Similar beautification standards apply to their worlds; whilst dirt tracks and debris are incorporated into many of City’s depictions of playsets, Friends’ world is one of spotless surfaces and perfectly sculpted, aesthetically pleasing (and uniform) foliage.

## 5.2 Building relationships with the toy: saving City and making Friends

Visually, City and Friends are situated as imaginative worlds through referring to both naturalistic and sensory coding orientations (see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). Even computer-generated images animate the play of light (illumination) (Table 1:1b), suggesting a tangible physicality to the toys by mimicking the way in which they would be seen in the real world. However, less detail (in background contextualisation, representation and depth) represents the toys as ‘less than real’ by naturalistic standards of detail, whilst bright, lowly modulated and highly saturated colours present the franchises as naturalistically ‘more than real’, with such use of colour signalling energy and fun, and a high sensory modality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). In other words, these worlds are presented as emotionally engaging and exciting, playful and idealised toy worlds, rather than a naturalistic representation of users’ real-life worlds. Playing with both becomes a chance to enact users’ fantasies.

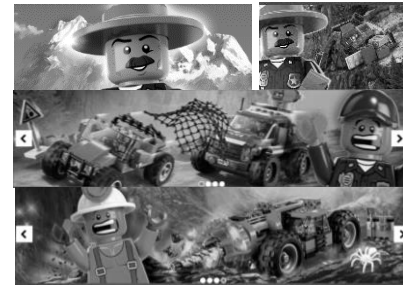
Interestingly, both sites emphasise users’ responsibility as citizens to help the cities in these fantasies, supporting a neoliberal foregrounding of individual citizen responsibility above the state (even though civil services feature heavily in City). However, beyond this, in accordance with their distinct worlds, the sites promote substantially different imaginative play and relationships with the toys. Overwhelmingly, City constructs an action-focused, professional relationship with users that encourages children to aspire to, and/or take on, a leadership role to be the required hero. Meanwhile, Friends constructs a social-oriented and collaborative relationship for users to join the friends and help their world. This is realised on multiple semiotic levels, including differences in visual modality, language and website format, some of which are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** A comparison of some of the choices made by the LEGO® Friends and City homepages. Screenshots from Lego City and Friends (2018). All rights reserved.

Component of the homepage	LEGO® Friends	LEGO® City
Subheadings (1a)		



Characters  
(1b)



Using the toy  
(1c)



Tabs (1d)



Background  
(1e)



(light pink and purple colours, with splashes of bright yellow, green and blue for emojis and doodle designs)



(mid blue; darker blues distinguish bricks)

The homepage formats construct different relationships and roles for their users (Table 1:1d). Overall, City attributes greater agency to users than Friends through providing more navigational choices. It is not only linguistically that City encourages consumers to '[c]hoose your missions' while Friends provides the characters and users one 'mission': to 'bring more heart into the world'. City's homepage provides more opportunities for user action; it has double Friends' number of tabs (8 versus 4 tabs) and repeatedly encourages users to 'explore' various activities, videos, galleries, apps and more. Instead, Friends' homepage structurally, lexically and visually directs users to bond with its characters, not explore its world.

Friends simulates an increasingly intimate friendship with its five characters; scrolling through the homepage, users are continually met with the five girls (three of the four rows of images and video thumbnails feature animated close ups of the five characters, with the other showing the products). The 'meet the friends' tab at the top of the homepage also comprehensively introduces the characters (including their likes and dislikes). On the

homepage, the friends are first introduced through medium and close-up horizontal, eye-level shots, where they strike informal (usually smiling) poses and generally look at the viewer (Table 1:1b). This, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) note, directly addresses viewers as equals and ‘demands’ social affinity through the friends’ welcoming poses and by placing viewers within ‘close personal distance’ (127-131). That any non-characters are either looking away or, as with the LEGO® head accompanying the ‘meet the friends’ tab, are faceless (Table 1:1d), restricts such bonding to the five Friends characters.

Captioning individual images with names further simulates the initial introduction required to develop friendships, which is continued by a concluding conversational paragraph that is structured like an introductory meeting. Users are initially directly addressed and welcomed by the social group (explicitly so by the subheading ‘LEGO® friends welcome you’), before being invited to engage in a mutually supportive relationship with the goal of helping others (‘Let’s help each other make the world a better place!’). The Friends characters are then described in the third person (8 times) to introduce them, before the “conversation” focuses back on the consumer with a second person direct address (7 times) and concludes with an imperative to ‘Come join the girls and all the fun in Heartlake City – We’ve got heart!’. Here, the ambiguous pronoun ‘we’ may also include children who play with the franchise, providing the alluring promise of belonging to the LEGO® Friends’ “we” group, much like any new real-life social group. For this, users are encouraged to ‘Be creative, have fun with your friends, help others, and YOU can bring a little more heart into the world, too - YOUR heart <3 :-)’. Capitalisation emphasises each users’ individual importance as indicated by synthetic personalisation (Fairclough 1989), whilst the emoticons (signalling a heart and smiling face respectively) simulate a self-expressive and rapport-building technique of online friendship. Such techniques mitigate the power imbalance suggested by the homepage’s frequent imperatives (e.g. ‘be creative’), to construct a more friendly dynamic founded on niceness, equality and fun.

Conversely, City foregrounds that ‘heroes’ (the children) are ‘needed’ to ‘protect[]’ City’s citizens from ‘crooks’ and ‘bad guys’, simplifying the law to a binary of “good” versus “bad” people. Users are encouraged to align themselves with the (Mountain) police; this is most explicit in the final image, where an adult male police officer is presented as users’ representative character for the City game (Table 1:1c). There is a hierarchy within this. Characters display two types of ‘demands’ of the viewer (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006); lower ranking officers and citizens scream with outstretched arms at viewers in a plea for help, their panic emphasised by their tilted angle, whilst higher-ranking authorities calmly smile and either point specifically to viewers as being chosen, or offer up a badge and handcuffs for them to use, signalling acceptance into the Mountain Police. Horizontal shots and face-on angles align viewers with the characters’ world, encouraging them to enter it and imagine themselves as the hero needed. Those pleading for help tend to be at eye-level, whilst some higher-ranking authorities are framed by a slightly lower camera angle, positioning them as powerful in relation to the viewer (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). That the disparity is only slight, however, implies that their leadership status is an attainable goal for users, encouraging them to choose positions of power.

Throughout, City promotes achieving physical action above relationships. A lower reading level is expected, since City displays much greater linguistic concision, both in overall word count (totalling 166 words to Friends’ 260), and its shorter sentences and paragraphs. This action focus is evident in the imperatives that constitute 80% of City’s subheadings (Table 1:1a), where the addressee is only implicit and their action (to ‘help solve’, ‘watch’, ‘play’ and ‘check this out’) foregrounded. There is no linguistic mitigation of such imperatives; instead,

users are visually attributed power (as discussed above). City uses only a third of Friends' personal pronoun phrases and possessive determiners (7 to Friends' 21), and in only two instances are the 'you' of the viewer and the 'they' of City's world placed in a direct relationship with one another. This is in a professional and goal-oriented context ('Can you build a winter vehicle for the Mountain Police to use?' and 'watch how other heroes catch crooks...so you can stop them in their tracks!'). Overall, City prioritises communicative directness, succinctness and achieving goals above developing social bonds.

### **5.3 Toys versus people**

These relationships impact the representation of the toy and its characters in users' worlds. City is a toy to be constructed and controlled, and Friends a toy to emotionally invest in. For example, Friends closely details characters' names and personalities, whereas City does not, which both backgrounds the development of close social bonds and leaves their names and attributes to consumers' imaginations, providing City users with greater control over the characters in the world. Equally, whilst each Friends characters' clothes express aspects of their personality and interests (e.g. performer Andrea wears a top with music notes), City characters are only shown in their professional uniforms (stripes if they are criminals). Appearance indicates (professional) status in City and expresses an individual's personality in Friends. This is but one example of how City and Friends differently position their toy in relation to the consumer, encouraging users to relate to Friends characters not as malleable inanimate objects but as real personalities, whilst City characters are minifigures to be positioned and used at will to enact the child's fantasies. This difference is embedded in the different modalities afforded to the sets.

Throughout, Friends attempts to blur boundaries between users' real and play worlds. Visually, it makes a great effort to be more naturalistically realistic; indeed, the Friends figurines are modelled to be more realistic at the expense of practical use (their different shape means that they cannot fit onto other LEGO sets; see Black et al 2016:75). Friends' homepage takes this even further. Computer-generated images of the characters present them as closer to real-life people, making them appear more tangible options as friends (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:163-4). This friendship extends to representations of playing with the sets (Table 1:1c). Real life girls are photographed playing with the sets; these photographs have the highest (naturalistic) modality and 'offer' the girls as informative examples about how users could experience the sets. Four photos feature a pair playing together, with one caption making explicit Friends' message of collaborative friendships, with 'Best Friends Build Together' positioning the Friends toy as a means of furthering users' real-life friendships. Using front-facing horizontal medium close-up shots positions the girls as close to and part of the viewer's world, and therefore suggests that a similar scene, namely female friendship, is achievable (and desirable) for the viewer (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006:124, 143). Notably, the scenes' backgrounds are simplified rooms that are only contextualised through the Friends characters. Each background is colour-coded according to the set's main character, and features objects signifying their particular interests (such as a camera, table and sewing machine for the artistic Emma). This positions the real girls to an extent in the play world and play as a means of getting to know each character more intimately. Images of the sets and the minifigures are superimposed either side of the girls playing, which further blurs the distinction between the imaginary and real world. Interestingly, the seven photos featuring one individual girl are more likely to include an image where at least one Friends character is dominant in the frame, suggesting that Friends can simulate real-life friendships for girls.

No such photographs of children playing with the sets exists for City. Overall, user engagement is as an individual, as indicated by the absence of images of people playing

together and the single device presented to users as the way to experience City through gaming (Table 1:1c). Instead, dynamic toy action sequences are ‘offered’ to users as ways to experience the sets; these scenes tend to showcase conflict with City’s criminals and are situated behind the City characters who directly address the viewer, inviting them into the scene and suggesting the kinds of action-based, heroic imaginative play that users should have. The toys are set against computer generated backgrounds of mountains, woods and other scenes from City, representing the imaginary world of City as truer to (naturalistic) standards of reality. Subsequently, using the toy becomes the way to create such a world. The franchise is always presented as exactly that: as a toy to be built and moved around as the child wishes within the imagined world of City. This includes the characters, who are animated throughout as the traditional yellow minifigures. Such a distinction is reflected in the homepage backgrounds (Table 1:1e). City’s brick background represents it as a constructive LEGO® toy, whilst Friends’ background instead resembles a scrapbook, or journal, filled with doodles that situate the toy within fellow (female) children’s personalities, interests and lives. City is presented as a world that users can build, and Friends a world that users can join.

## 6 Discussion

This analysis demonstrates that LEGO reproduces and reinforces a hegemonic masculine-feminine gender distinction via Friends and City, privileging different representations of the world and relationships, namely heroism and conflict for boys, and kindness and friendship for girls. Notably, on the homepages, City promotes goal-orientated talk, whilst Friends’ focuses on forming and maintaining intimate social relationships. This reproduces the concept of masculine and feminine communication styles (e.g. Coates 1993, 2016; Goodwin 1980), and further perpetuates the sociocultural emphasis placed upon friendship for girls’ childhoods and identities (Aapola et al. 2005). In addition to confirming previous studies on this issue (Black et al. 2016; Reich et al. 2018), this analysis has also explored the impact that these gendered worlds and relationships have on the role of the toy in users’ worlds. Overall, I propose that neither is more realistic in its representations; rather, they construct substantially different worlds, relationships and realities for users.

Friends grounds itself in the personalities and lives of five girls living in an affluent, spotless suburban world filled mostly with fun, kindness and self-expression. Comparatively, City orients around needing a hero to help keep law and order, presenting a simplified conflict between the “good” (police) and “bad guys” (criminals). These are both distinct worldviews that foreground different aspects of real life (namely, personal/domestic and professional/structural spheres respectively) and are in this way presenting partial and restricted, rather than entirely ‘realistic’, LEGO worlds (LEGO 2019a). For instance, what world only consists of beauty, wealth and fun? Of course, for any representation to be entirely realistic is practically impossible; what is interesting is the semiotic choices made on these sites to provide such different worldviews, and the implications of these.

Notably, being nice and ‘mak[ing] the world a better place’ as a citizen is Friends’ central message (which reinforces a neoliberal foregrounding of individual above state responsibilities), yet there is little place for disability, difference or any kind of deviance here. Where are the people who are not represented by the five central characters (boys included)? Friends’ homepage presents a social bubble that is founded on not only gender divisions but also elitist assumptions of uncomplicated health, happiness and prosperity. Similarly, City’s binary of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ excludes any exploration of institutional inequalities and discrimination, or other sociocultural factors for crime. In this way, like Friends, City offers a

world that is neoliberal in its attribution of responsibility (for crime) to individuals, despite the prominence of civil services, such as the police, in the franchise.

Moreover, the franchises' different worlds influence how they encourage users to relate to the toys. Friends directs users to seek friendship, of both girls in their real-life worlds and of Friends' characters, who are depicted as three-dimensional individuals that users interact with and emotionally invest in. This is achieved through greater linguistic and visual detail, providing names, personalities and hobbies, and more naturalistic character representations, which present characters as closer to someone a user could see and befriend in real life. Meanwhile, interweaving real-life girls playing with the sets and Friends characters further blurs distinctions between the toy, its imaginative world and users' lives. Instead, City encourages users to fantasise about being a hero in an adult's world, where risks are high (with fast-paced chases, dangerous criminals and constant panic-inducing scenarios) but personal consequences low, since no emotional ties are encouraged to characters or the sets that users interact with. City minifigures are just another component of the constructible toy world that City offers to children.

In this way, it can be argued that boys are presented with lower modality fantasies than girls, since the human connections and consequences are lower for an anonymous toy minifigure than for a representative of an individual; if the Friends character Andrea is hurt or upset, this is of higher personal importance than a nameless, non-naturalistic minifigure. Personalising a minifigure is more likely to encourage greater empathy. Not only are boys encouraged to be heroes and girls friends, then, but they are actually encouraged to regard the constructive worlds of City and Friends differently when engaging with them. Girls are encouraged to emotionally invest in friendships and see the imaginary world as closer to their real lives, even interweaving the friendships of the Friends characters with their own, whereas boys are encouraged to regard the world as a binary between themselves as heroes against 'the bad guys', backgrounding any more complex interpersonal relationships. In such a world, conflict is central to identity, and actions (such as violence) potentially have lower emotional stakes.

Of course, children do not necessarily follow these pre-established identities, roles and worlds; indeed, much evidence indicates that children happily ignore or adapt these (Van Leeuwen 2009; Wohlwend 2009). There is nothing to stop a child from caring deeply about an unnamed citizen from City (or developing an identity and life for them), or from using Friends' Andrea minifigure as an anonymous citizen, criminal or police officer. Investigating children's responses to these sets and their representations is the next logical step moving forwards, especially considering the fluid nature of modality (Ravelli and Van Leeuwen 2018). For this, expanding beyond this in-depth analysis of the homepages to incorporate the videos, weblinks and activities that they are situated within could prove fruitful. Furthermore, reflecting the 'notoriously ephemeral' nature of online content (Mautner 2010:157), it is important to highlight that the websites have already changed since this analysis was conducted, and indeed will continue to do so as the franchises progress. Some of the visual modality, linguistic differences and format points that have been raised here have been altered by the standardisation of the children's LEGO® site, shifting relations again between child users and LEGO. A particular point of interest is now the difference between the adult and child versions of the websites, which again demonstrate significantly different visual, linguistic and formatting choices, thereby structuring alternate relationships with the franchises and their (imaginary) worlds.

In our increasingly multimodal world, where semiotic resources are ever more manipulated and shaped by producers such as LEGO (Ledin and Machin 2018), researchers

must attend critically to texts on multiple semiotic levels. A multimodal perspective is vital for identifying both a text's overall message(s) and its more subtle discourses. Here, attending to visual modality alongside other visual and linguistic resources extends observations of gender differences to interrogate how these can impact relations between toys, users and the real world. Following researchers such as Black et al. (2014) and Ravelli and Van Leeuwen (2018), I advocate that analyses such as this are inherently valuable for critical literacy and pedagogy. Developing the deconstructive skills of citizens (educators, caregivers and children alike) facilitates a more reflective engagement with social texts, which can enhance our awareness of how such texts can affect our sense of self, social relationships and aspirations as we move through life. We live in societies where a significant gender disparity remains, including in leadership figures and (nurturing versus constructive) occupations across adulthood (European Union 2018; McGuinness 2018). Although this cannot in any way be solely attributed to children's media such as LEGO® City and Friends, interrogating how children are encouraged to view and interact with imaginary worlds can provide useful insight. Such toys are, after all, a way to build worlds, which are grounded in, and build upon, the "real" worlds of their creators.

### **About the author**

Emma Putland is a doctoral researcher at the University of Nottingham. She is currently investigating representations of dementia in British media through multimodal and corpus analysis, alongside interviewing people with experience of dementia about this subject. Her broader research interests include health, environmental, age and gender-related discourses.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank everyone involved in the creation of this article. In particular, thank you to the individuals who read through this work (sometimes on more than one occasion), the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful and highly constructive feedback, and Chris Paterson-Chikodzore for providing the illustrations that originally featured in this article.

### **References**

- Aapola, S., Gonick, M. and Harris, A. (2005) *Young Femininity*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alvin, L. P. (2016) The Thematic Structure of Homepages: An Exploratory Systemic-functional Account. *Semiotica* 210: 105-27. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2016-0048>
- Berk, L. E. (2009) *Child Development* (8<sup>th</sup> edn.). Boston: Pearson Education International.
- Black, R. W., Korobkova, K. and Epler, A. (2014) Barbie Girls and Xtractaurs: Discourse and Identity in Virtual Worlds for young Children. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 14(2): 265–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798413494920>
- Black, R. W., Tomlinson, B. and Korobkova, K. (2016) Play and Identity in gendered LEGO Franchises. *International Journal of Play* 5(1): 64-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2016.1147284>
- Blakemore, J. and Centers, R. (2005) Characteristics of Boys' and Girls' Toys. *Sex Roles* 53(9-10): 619-33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-7729-0>

Cameron, D. (1997) Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity. In S. Johnson and U. H. Meinhof (eds) *Language and Masculinity* 47– 64. Oxford: Blackwell.

Carrington, V. and Dowdall, C. (2013) 'This is a job for hazmat guy!': Global Media Cultures and Children's everyday Lives. In K. Hall, T. Cremin, B. Comber and L. C. Moll (eds) *International Handbook of Research on Children's Literacy, Learning, and Culture* 96–107. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Coates, J. (1993) *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn). New York: Longman.

Coates, J. (2016) *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn). London: Routledge.

Cook, D. T. (2004) *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children's Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer*. London: Duke University Press.

Corsaro, W. A. (2018) *The Sociology of Childhood* (5<sup>th</sup> edn). London: Sage.

de Castella, T. (2014) How did Lego become a Gender Battleground? *BBC News Magazine*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-28660069>

Diamond, J. (2016) Sex Talk: The Secret to Male and Female Communication. *The Good Men Project*. <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/sex-talk-men-women-communication-wcz/>

European Union. (2018) *2018 Report on equality between women and men in the EU*. Belgium: OIB.

Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2010) *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn). London: Routledge.

Goodwin, M. H. (1980) Directive-Response Speech Sequences in Girls' and Boys' Task Activities. In S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker and N. Furman (eds) *Women and Language in Literature and Society* 157-173. New York: Praeger Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01207.x>

Gray, J. (1992) *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. London: Element Greenwood Press.

Koller, V. (2008) 'Not just a Colour': Pink as a Gender and Sexuality Marker in Visual Communication. *Visual Communication* 7: 395-423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357208096209>

Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2002) Colour as a Semiotic Mode: Notes for a Grammar of Colour. *Visual Communication* 1(3): 343-68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147035720200100306>

Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2006) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn). London: Routledge.

Ledin, P. and Machin, D. (2018) *Doing Visual Analysis: From Theory to Practice*. London: Sage.

LEGO. (2011) LEGO Group to deliver meaningful Play Experiences to Girls with new LEGO® Friends. *Newsroom*. Retrieved on 22 October 2018 from <https://www.LEGO.com/en-us/aboutus/news-room/2011/december/LEGO-group-to-deliver-meaningful-play-experiences-to-girls-with-new-LEGO-friends>.

LEGO. (2017) LEGO Group Reports full Year Results for 2017. *About Us*. Retrieved on 26 April 2018 from <https://www.LEGO.com/en-us/aboutus/news-room/2018/march/annual-results-2017>.

LEGO. (2018a). *LEGO® website: for Kids*. Retrieved on 13 November 2018 from <https://www.lego.com/en-gb/kids>.

LEGO. (2018b) *LEGO® Friends – Products and Sets*. Retrieved on 22 October 2018 from <https://www.LEGO.com/en-gb/themes/friends/products##sp=30&4cf0-b0f8=1>.

LEGO. (2018c) *LEGO® Shop: City*. Retrieved on 10 October 2018 from [https://shop.LEGO.com/en-GB/city?all=1&callback=json&cc=gb&count=18&do=json-db&i=1&jsonp=jsonCallback&lang=en&q=\\* &q1=E2034D52-000A-43AB-A026-06F14E7A23C1&rank=rank\\_vrs&showRetired=false&sp\\_q\\_exact\\_9=gb&userquery=\\* &x1=theme\\_id](https://shop.LEGO.com/en-GB/city?all=1&callback=json&cc=gb&count=18&do=json-db&i=1&jsonp=jsonCallback&lang=en&q=* &q1=E2034D52-000A-43AB-A026-06F14E7A23C1&rank=rank_vrs&showRetired=false&sp_q_exact_9=gb&userquery=* &x1=theme_id).

LEGO. (2018d) *LEGO® City*. Retrieved on 19 March 2018 from <https://www.LEGO.com/en-gb/themes/city>.

LEGO. (2018e) *LEGO® Friends*. Retrieved on 19 March 2018 from <https://www.LEGO.com/en-gb/themes/friends>.

LEGO. (2018f) *LEGO® Shop: Friends: Heartlake Hair Salon*. Retrieved on 7 November 2018 from <https://shop.LEGO.com/en-DE/Heartlake-Hair-Salon-41093>.

LEGO. (2019a). *LEGO® Shop: City*. Retrieved on 17 September 2019 from <https://www.lego.com/en-gb/themes/city>.

LEGO. (2019a). *LEGO® Shop: Friends*. Retrieved on 17 September 2019 from <https://www.lego.com/en-gb/themes/friends>.

Machin, D. and Mayr, A. (2012) *How To Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction*. London: Sage.

Machin, D. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2009) Toys as Discourse: Children's War Toys and the War on Terror. *Critical Discourse Studies* 6(1): 51-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900802560082>

Mautner, G. (2010) *Language and the Market Society: Critical Reflections on Discourse and Dominance*. Oxon: Routledge.

McGuinness, F. (2018) *Women and the Economy*. Online: House of Commons.

Messariss, P. and Abraham, L. (2001) The Role of Images in Framing News Stories. In S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy and A. E. Grant (eds) *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World* 215-226. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

National Geographic. (2011) *LEGO Facts*. Retrieved on 22 October 2018 from <https://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/history/LEGO-facts.aspx>.



- Paoletti, J. (2012) *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Ravelli, L. J. and Van Leeuwen (2018) Modality in the Digital Age. *Visual Communication* 17(3): 277–297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357218764436>
- Reich, S. M., Black, R. W. and Foliaki, T. (2018) Constructing Difference: LEGO® Set Narratives Promote Stereotypic Gender Roles and Play. *Sex Roles* 79(5): 285-298. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0868-2>
- SimilarWeb. (2019) *Traffic Overview of Lego.com*. Retrieved on 19 June 2019 from <https://http://www.similarweb.com/website/Lego.com>.
- Talbot, M. (1995) A Synthetic Sisterhood: False Friends in a Teenage Magazine. In K. Hall and M. Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the socially constructed self* 143-65. London Routledge.
- Tannen, D. (1990) *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2009) The World according to Playmobil. *Semiotica* 173: 299-315. <https://doi.org/10.1515/SEMI.2009.013>
- Widdowson, H. G. (1998) The Theory and Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Applied Linguistics* 19(1): 136-51.
- Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (2009) Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology. In R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn) 1-33. London: Sage.
- Wohlwend, K. (2009) Damsels in Discourse: Girls Consuming and Producing Identity through Disney Princess Play. *Reading Research Quarterly* 44(1): 57–83. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.44.1.3>

# Appendix 1: The Lego Friends 2018 home page

The screenshot shows the LEGO Friends 2018 home page. At the top left is the LEGO logo with a dropdown arrow. To its right is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon, followed by 'LEGO ID' and 'LOG IN REGISTER' links. A small flag icon is on the far right. Below the navigation is a large banner featuring the five main characters: Mia, Emma, Andrea, Stephanie, and Olivia. The banner includes navigation links for 'LEGO FRIENDS', 'MEET THE FRIENDS', 'PRODUCTS', and 'VIDEOS'. Below the banner are five character portraits in decorative frames, each labeled with the character's name: Andrea, Emma, Mia, Olivia, and Stephanie. The next section features a product showcase for '41332 Emma's Art Stand', showing the assembled set and a girl building it. Below this are two video thumbnails: 'Girls on a mission — Heartlake City' and 'LEGO® Friends Music Video — We've Got Heart'. The page includes 'Privacy Policy' and 'Cookies' links in several locations.

## LEGO® Friends welcome you to Heartlake City

Are you ready to go on a mission to bring more heart into the world? Join the five brave LEGO® Friends girls from Heartlake City! Let's help each other make the world a better place! Heartlake City is the home of the fun, quirky and silly LEGO Friends characters Emma, Olivia, Stephanie, Andrea and Mia. They are cool and friendly girls with heart, who help every new friend they meet on their mission to make the world and Heartlake City a nicer place to be. They are all very different. They can be loud, impulsive, goofy, quiet, creative, loving, wild, daring or caring. They sometimes act before they think, but that's when the real

fun happens! And they always find a way to reach their goals: to help those in need. Be creative, have fun with your Friends, help others, and YOU can bring a little more heart into the world, too — YOUR heart <3 :-> — You can build houses, shops, playgrounds, hotels and anything you can imagine with the different LEGO® Friends sets. — Play fun web games like Pool Basket, Ready for School and Pet Puzzle. — Design your own heart card and send fun, creative greetings to your friends. Come join the girls and all the fun in Heartlake City — We've got heart!

### Customer Service

- › Building Instructions
- › Replacement Parts
- › Contact Us
- › Product Recalls

### About Us

- › Responsibility
- › Jobs
- › Legal Information
- › Newsroom
- › Supply Chain Transparency Statement

### Parents

- › Birthday Party Ideas
- › Building Ideas
- › Child Development
- › Play Ideas

### Educators

- › LEGO Education website
- › LEGO Education Products

### Attractions

- › LEGO House
- › LEGOLAND Parks
- › LEGOLAND Discovery Centers

[Privacy Policy](#) • [Cookies](#) • [Legal Notice](#) • [Terms of Use](#)


LEGO, the LEGO logo, the Minifigure, DUPLO, BIONICLE, LEGENDS OF CHIMA, DIMENSIONS, the FRIENDS logo, the MINIFIGURES logo, MINISTORMS, MIXELS, NINJAGO and NEXO KNIGHTS are trademarks of the LEGO Group. ©2018 The LEGO Group.

[Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#)




Source: © Lego Group 2018. Screenshots reproduced according to Lego's guidelines for reproduction of their materials in non-commercial work.

# Appendix 2: The Lego City 2018 home page

SearchLEGOLOG INREGISTER

## CITY




[LEGO CITY](#) [HEROES NEEDED](#) [PRODUCTS](#) [GALLERY](#) [VIDEOS](#) [GAMES](#) [ACTIVITIES](#) [JUNGLE](#)

### LEGO® CITY



#### CHECK THIS OUT.




How well do you know the Mountain Police's vehicles, their headquarters and the wildlife they're protecting the public from?

[Explore](#)



Quizzes, comics, activity sheets, posters, wallpapers and coloring pages. Explore loads of fun LEGO® City activities for the whole family

[Go to activities](#)




The mountains are covered in snow and policing gets harder! Can you build a winter vehicle for the Mountain Police to use?


[Go to gallery](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#)

#### HELP SOLVE LEGO® CITY'S PROBLEMS!



#### WATCH THIS...



Watch This...


LEGO® City is in trouble!

Meet a real Mountain Police officer, watch how other heroes catch crooks, and learn all the tricks bad guys use to break out of jail and commit crimes so you can stop them in their tracks!

[Watch Videos](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#)

#### PLAY THIS ...



Go explore with the LEGO® City App!

New missions, new builds, new game! Choose your missions, upgrade your vehicles and even build custom ones!

[Learn more](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#)

#### Customer Service

- Building Instructions
- Replacement Parts
- Contact Us
- Product Recalls

#### About Us

- Responsibility
- Sales
- Legal Information
- Newsroom
- Supply Chain Transparency Statement

#### Parents

- Birthday Party Ideas
- Building Ideas
- Child Development
- Play Ideas

#### Educators

- LEGO Education website
- LEGO Education Products

#### Attractions

- LEGO House
- LEGOLAND Parks
- LEGOLAND Discovery Centers

[Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Legal Notice](#) [Terms of Use](#)

LEGO, the LEGO logo, the Minifigure, DUPLO, BRICKLE, LEGENDE OF CHINA, DIMENSIONAL, the FRIENDS logo, the MINIFIGURES logo, HEROISTORIAL, MOVIES, NINJAGO and NEXO KNIGHTS are trademarks of the LEGO Group. ©2018 The LEGO Group.

[Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#)



Source: © Lego Group 2018. Screenshots reproduced according to Lego's guidelines for reproduction of their materials in non-commercial work.