

Thaumatrope

A thaumatrope (tho-ma-trop) is a Victorian toy. It consists of two images printed on opposite sides of a disc or card. When you twirl the thaumatrope, its two pictures appear to blend into one!

What's happening? Your eye retains an image it has just seen for a split second, even after a new image is introduced. So you "see" both images at the same time. This phenomenon is called "persistence of vision."

Optical toys were very popular in Victorian England, and they had crazy names like thaumatrope, phenakistiscope, zoetrope, choreutoscope, filoscope, and praxinoscope.