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(54) **INTERCHANGEABLE GAME PIECES AND METHOD OF GAME PLAY**

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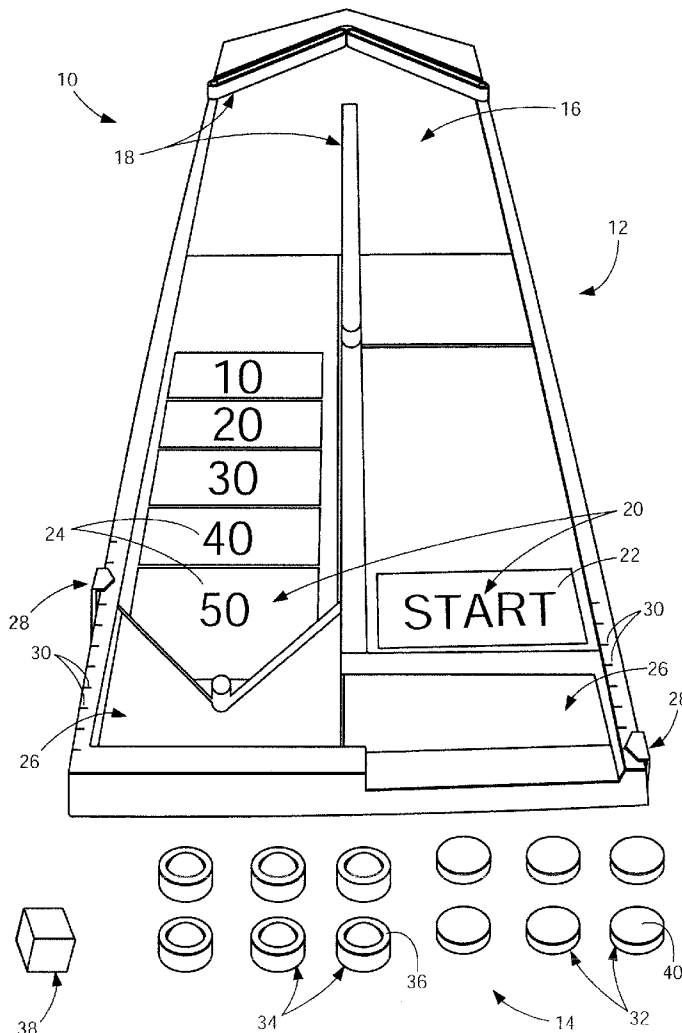
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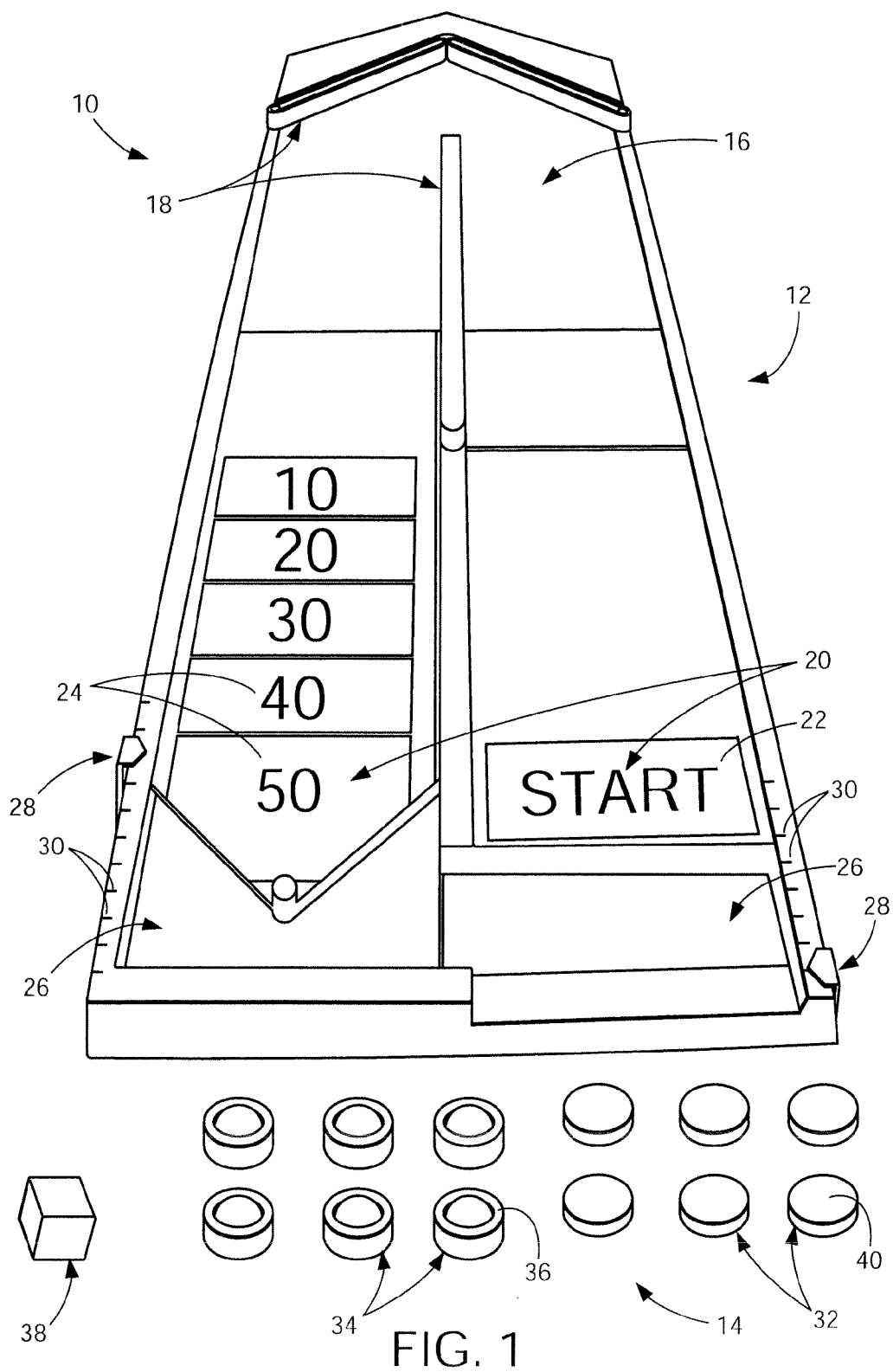
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A board game that incorporates a playing surface and movable game pieces. In some embodiments the game pieces include a character portion and a movement portion. The character portions may be interchangeable with the movement portions. In some methods of game play, players maneuver their game pieces between regions of the board to attain points.

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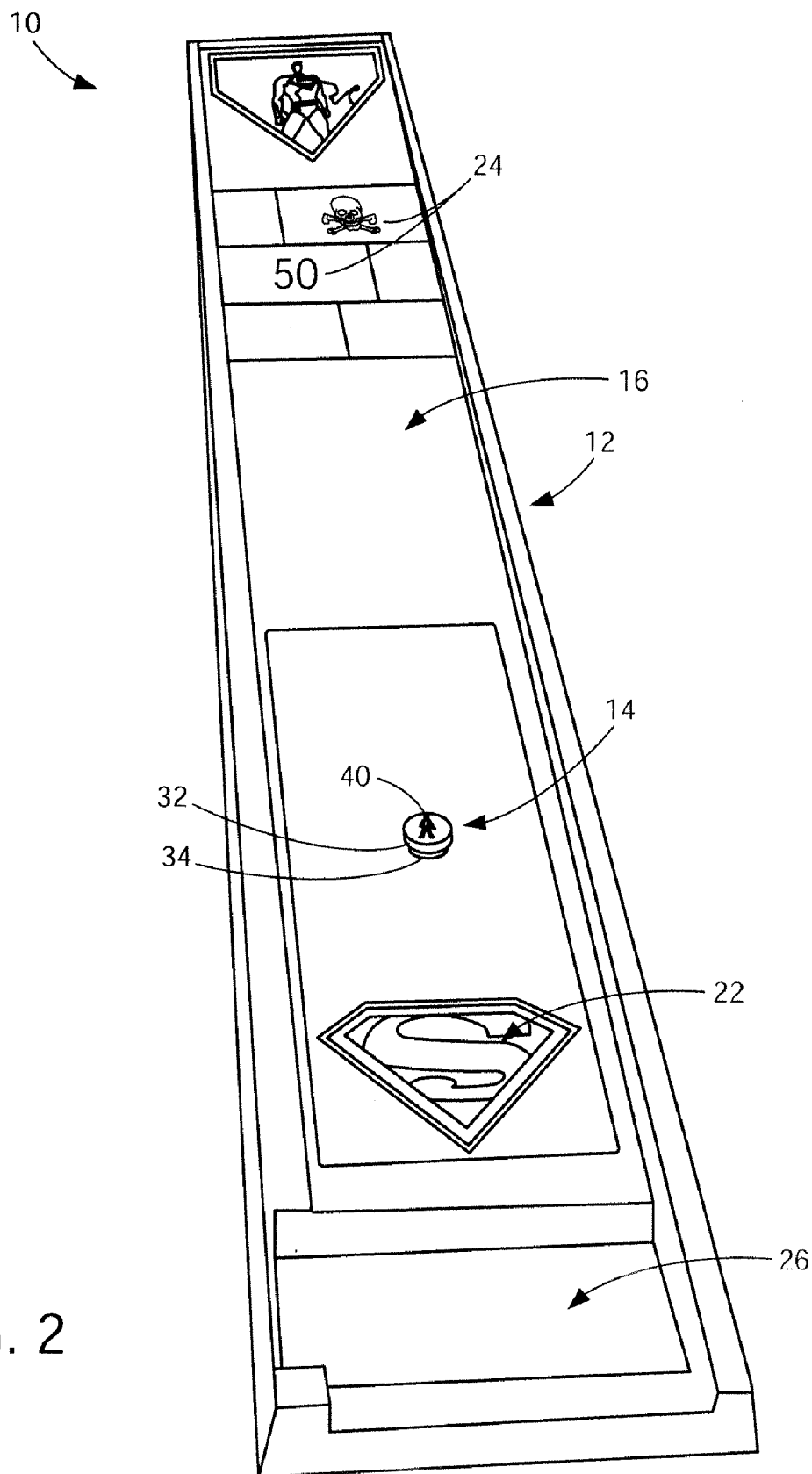


FIG. 2

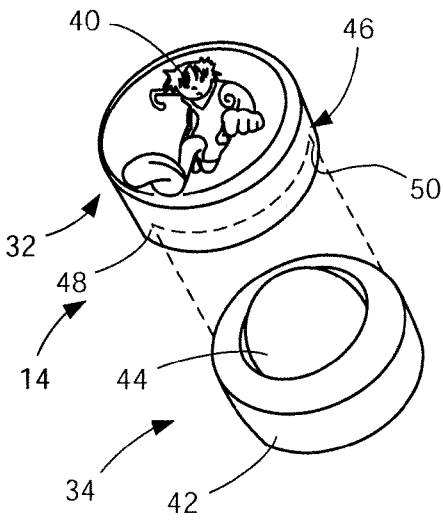


FIG. 3

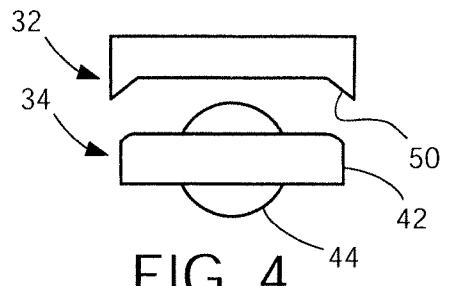


FIG. 4

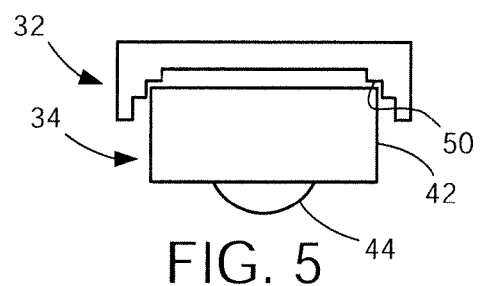


FIG. 5

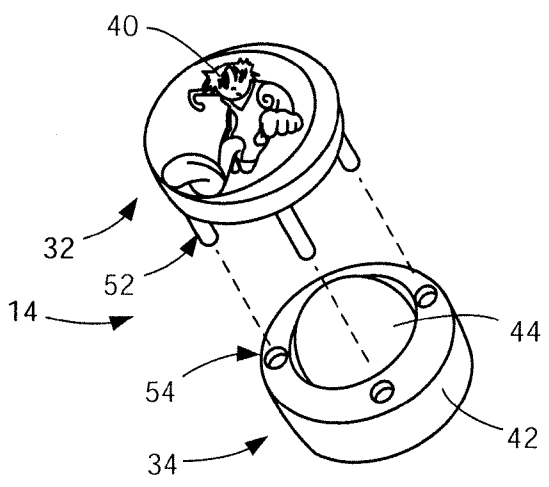


FIG. 6

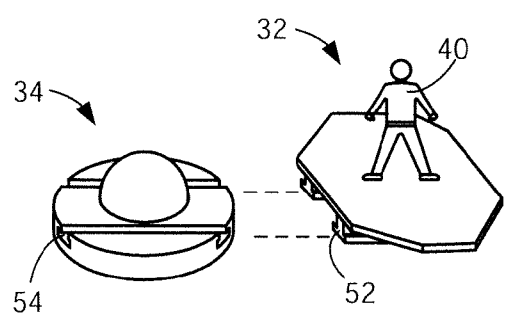


FIG. 7

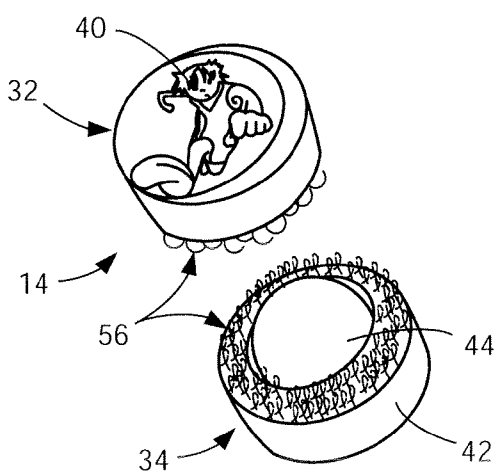


FIG. 8

**INTERCHANGEABLE GAME PIECES AND METHOD OF GAME PLAY**

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

[0001] This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. 119(e) to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/718,161 entitled "INTERCHANGEABLE GAME PIECES AND METHOD OF GAME PLAY," filed Sep. 16, 2005, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

**BACKGROUND**

[0002] This disclosure relates generally to table top board games having resilient barriers and movable game pieces. Games incorporating such components are found in U.S. Pat. Nos. 742,250, 800,741, 1,051,613, 1,599,188, 1,980,105, 2,990,180, 3,174,752, 3,206,210, 3,219,349, 3,403,911, 3,762,711, 3,907,294, 3,929,336, 4,017,078, 4,502,686, 5,011,147, 5,362,045, 5,516,102, 5,733,213, 5,755,439, 5,893,791, 5,976,042, 6,357,745, 6,435,929, D285,943, D370,699, D472,584, and D476,697, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

**SUMMARY**

[0003] The present disclosure relates generally to a board game that incorporates a board having resilient barriers and movable game pieces. More specifically, it relates to a game in which players may select game piece components and maneuver their game pieces between regions of the board.

[0004] The advantages of the disclosed board game may be understood more readily after a consideration of the drawings and the Detailed Description.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

[0005] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an exemplary game including a game board with barriers and movable player pieces.

[0006] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of another exemplary game including a game board and movable player pieces.

[0007] FIG. 3 illustrates an exemplary movable game piece in which a character portion is coupled to a movement portion using a press-fit configuration.

[0008] FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of a press fit configuration suitable for use with the game piece of FIG. 3.

[0009] FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of another press fit configuration suitable for use with the game piece of FIG. 3.

[0010] FIG. 6 illustrates an exemplary movable game piece in which a character portion is coupled to a movement portion via protrusions.

[0011] FIG. 7 illustrates an exemplary movable game piece in which a character portion slides relative to a movement portion to couple the character and movement portions together.

[0012] FIG. 8 illustrates an exemplary movable game piece in which a character portion is coupled to a movement portion using a hook-and-loop connection.

[0013] FIGS. 1 and 2 illustrate a game 10 that includes a game board or table 12 and player pieces 14. The game may be played by one or more players by maneuvering the player pieces relative to board 12 to score points. The game components may be used in table games, such as hockey, tennis, shuffle board, and the like, or with traditional board games.

[0014] Board 12 and player pieces 14 may be fabricated from any suitable material, or combination of materials, such as plastic, foamed plastic, wood, cardboard, pressed paper, metal, or the like. A suitable material may be selected to provide a desirable combination of weight, strength, durability, cost, manufacturability, appearance, safety, and the like. Suitable plastics may include high-density polyethylene (HDPE), low-density polyethylene (LDPE), polystyrene, acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS), polycarbonate, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polypropylene, ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA), or the like. Suitable foamed plastics may include expanded or extruded polystyrene, expanded or extruded polypropylene, EVA foam, or the like.

[0015] As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, board 12 may include a playing surface 16. Surface 16 may be made of, or coated with, a material having a suitable coefficient of friction to produce a desired amount of movement of player pieces 14. In some configurations, the playing surface may be formed from a variety of materials having different coefficients of friction, depending on the intended uses of the game components.

[0016] As shown in FIG. 1, playing surface 16 may at least partially be bounded by barriers 18. Barriers 18 may be formed from a substantially rigid material, a substantially soft material to dampen motion of player pieces 14, a resilient material to provide a rebound effect when a player piece 14 contacts the barrier, or a combination thereof. Barriers 18 may therefore be configured to affect movement options of the player pieces.

[0017] Board 12 may be marked with a variety of board indicia 20 or may include a washable surface so that a user may apply his or her own indicia. For example, board indicia 20 may indicate a start position 22, upon or behind which players must place their player pieces 14 before maneuvering the player pieces along surface 16. Indicia 20 may indicate an end position or point region 24 to which players attempt to maneuver their player piece in order to attain points. The indicia imprinted on the board in point region 24 may include numbers that directly display point values, pictures that indirectly correspond to point values, or a combination thereof. In configurations in which the indicia are pictures, the pictures may be related to point values in a particular way, such as provided in a look-up chart. In some versions of the game, players may begin the game by assigning point values to each picture, either randomly, such as through a dice roll, or by agreement. The indicia may provide instructions regarding calculating a point value, such as through a combination of dice rolls.

[0018] Board 12 may include one or more depressed regions 26 at the end of either or both halves of the board. For example, a depressed region may be provided on the right side (or starting in exemplary board 12) of the board to provide a storage region for player pieces 14. A depressed

region may be provided on the left side (or exemplary finish side) of the board in place of a barrier. In such a configuration, a player piece with too much momentum will slide off point region **24** into depressed region **26**.

[0019] Board **12** may include score counters **28**, as shown in FIG. **1**. For a game involving two players or teams, each player or team may record the corresponding score by moving a counter along a side of the board. Score indicia **30**, such as text or pictures, may be imprinted or formed on the edges of the board adjacent the counters. The score indicia may be affixed in a point region by any suitable means, such as printing directly on the board, removable and interchangeable sheets, or variations in the surface structure of the board, such as raised segments or ribs. For example, the sides of board **12** may include lines, against which a player may align counter **28**. Score indicia **30** may take any suitable form including, but not limited to, ridges, text, graphics, or a combination thereof.

[0020] As shown in FIGS. **1-8**, player pieces **14** may include a character portion **32** and a movement portion **34**. Character portion **32** may be selectively coupled to movement portion **34** by a fastening mechanism **36**. The character portions may therefore be interchangeable. In such a configuration, players may share movement portions **34** by passing that portion of the player piece to the next player once a turn is completed. Only a limited number of movement portions may therefore be needed to play the game since character portion **32** may be used to keep track of which player's turn it is.

[0021] One or more dice **38**, or other random indicia generator, may be included in game **10**, depending on the rules of the game. The die may be used to determine whose turn it is, what character portion to use, what point value to assign to indicia **24**, or a combination thereof.

[0022] Character indicia **40** may be associated with character portions **32** to denote a character associated with each character portion. Character indicia **40** may be marked on the character portions with a variety of methods. The character indicia may be permanently imprinted or sculpted on character portion **32** so that the character portions have permanent character indicia. The character portions may include a character figure extending from an upper surface of the character portion. In some versions of the game, character portion **32** may be provided with a washable surface so that players may create their own character indicia **40**, such as with markers, crayons, or other removable items, such as stickers.

[0023] Movement portion **34** may include a housing **42** and a rotatable component **44**, such as a roller or ball mounted within the housing. Housing **42** may be formed from any suitable material to provide a desired rebound effect with barriers **18** and/or frictional resistance with playing surface **16**. Rotatable component **44** may be similar to those used in bearings to control or reduce friction between housing **42** and playing surface **16**.

[0024] The movement portion may raise the character portion to a height greater than that of barriers **18**. For example, the movement portion may raise the character portion sufficiently to restrict contact between the character portion and the barriers. The shape of the perimeter of the movement portion and character portions may be any suit-

able combination of shapes depending on which of the movement and character portions may contact the barriers. For example, the movement portion may be cylindrical so as to not impede rebounding of the game piece, whereas the character portion may not contact the barriers and may be any other shape, such as rectangular, trapezoidal, or square. In some versions of the game, the game pieces may be configured to have varied surfaces to produce unpredictable effects upon contact with the barriers.

[0025] Fastening mechanism **36** may take a variety of forms, as depicted in FIGS. **3-8** to removably couple character portion **32** to movement portion **34**. For example, the fastening mechanism may be configured to press, slip, or friction fit a character portion to a movement portion. In such a configuration, an example of which is shown in FIG. **3**, the character portion may have a lip **46** with an engagement edge **48** that extends over at least some of the housing of the movement portion. The interior of the character portion may include a telescoping ledge **50** configured to seat against the top of the movement portion. The telescoping ledge may be located approximately one quarter of an inch from the engagement edge of the character portion. The ledge may be configured to prevent the character portion from pressing against rotatable component **44**, such as by suspending a region of the character portion away from the movement portion such that the character portion does not contact the rotatable component. In some configurations, the fastening mechanism may include an angled region on at least one of the character portion and the movement portion, as shown in FIG. **4**. In some configurations, the fastening mechanism may include a plurality of ledges, as shown in FIG. **5**, that may fit one or more sizes of movement portions.

[0026] In the example shown in FIG. **6**, the fastening mechanism includes one or more protrusions **52** extending from one of the character portion and the movement portion and adapted to insert into one or more apertures **54** in the other of the character portion and the movement portion. The fastening mechanism may include protrusions, such as posts or rails, that engage with apertures, such as holes, gaps, or slits. The protrusions and apertures may have corresponding geometry so that the protrusions are held in place by friction between the protrusions and apertures. The protrusions and apertures may include flexible extensions that expand to retain the protrusions within the apertures. The protrusions may engage the apertures in any direction relative to the direction the movement portion will slide along the playing surface. For example, the protrusions may engage the apertures perpendicular to the direction that the movement portion will slide along the playing surface. The protrusions may engage the apertures in a direction parallel to movement of the player piece, such as by forming a track along a surface of the movement portion, in which an extension of the character portion may engage, as shown in FIG. **7**. Any suitable configuration, quantity, and shape of protrusions and apertures may be used.

[0027] As shown in FIG. **8**, the character portion may be joined to the movement portion with a reusable material, such as a hook-and-loop material **56**. In some versions, the character portion may twist into or around a region of the movement portion much like a screw. Other materials may be used such as tapes, glues or putty having low bond strength, magnets, and the like.

[0028] One method of playing a table game using the above described components includes providing a game board having a playing surface imprinted with board indicia; providing a plurality of movement portions and character portions adapted to be coupled together; coupling a character portion to a movement portion to form a game piece; urging the game piece along the playing surface from an initial position towards a final position; and tallying points as indicated by the board indicia associated with the final position of the game piece. The method may further include selecting a character portion based on character indicia on the character portion. The points may be tallied as determined by a combination of the board indicia and character indicia. A subset of character indicia, from which one of the character portions is selected, may be determined by a prior point tally. A greater quantity of character portions than movement portions may be provided.

[0029] During game play, player pieces 14 are pushed from one region of the board in an attempt to reach another region of the board. For example, in the game of FIG. 1, a player may push his or her player piece from the start region in an attempt to bounce the player piece off of barriers 18 to move the player piece from the right-hand side of the board to the left-hand side of the board. In the game of FIG. 2, a player pushes a game piece from one end of the board to the other. The player's score may be determined by where player piece 14 comes to rest along point region indicia 24.

[0030] In an exemplary mode of play, the game is played by two to four players, typically over the age of six. The object of the game is to be the first player to defeat four bad guys in a row. The game includes a rebound board, eight movement portions, and eight character portions. Various creatures may be printed on the board in the point region.

[0031] At the beginning of the game, players choose who their four characters will be. The character portions are then coupled to the movement portions. Point counters are initially set to zero. The youngest player is typically allowed to go first. That player chooses one of his or her assembled player pieces and slides it along the board. Players alternate turns until all of the player pieces have been used. At the end of the round, players check to see if any of their player pieces landed on any of the creatures imprinted on the board. If so, then a power level associated with the player piece is compared to that of the corresponding creature. If the player piece has a higher power level than the creature, then that creature has been defeated and the creature's power level is added to that player's score. If the player piece has a lower value than the creature then that player may receive zero points or be penalized, such as by having points deducted from his or her total score. The first player to reach a predetermined score is the winner.

[0032] In some versions of the game, the character indicia represent weapons or abilities. The board is imprinted with indicia that match a variety of villains to a weapon or ability needed to successfully defeat the villain. Players earn points by maneuvering a player piece onto the corresponding indicia. For example, a player with the player piece labeled "Intellect" will need to maneuver the player piece onto the board space labeled "Lex Luthor—defeat with intellect."

[0033] In still other versions of the game, various combinations of the board indicia with indicia on the player pieces may determine the resulting score. For example, a player

may obtain points if the player piece indicia matches the underlying board indicia or if the player piece indicia is a higher value than the board indicia. For example, if the player piece depicting a genie lands on the board space depicting a genie, then the player may be awarded points as indicated by the board indicia, the player piece indicia, or a dice roll. Points may also be awarded if the player piece imprinted with a value, such as one hundred-fifty, lands on a board indicia associated with a value of one hundred. The player or team with the highest point total after a given number of rounds, or the first to reach a predetermined point total, is the winner.

[0034] Although the present invention has been shown and described with reference to the foregoing operational principles and preferred embodiments, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. The present invention is intended to embrace all such alternatives, modifications and variances. The subject matter of the present invention includes all novel and non-obvious combinations and subcombinations of the various elements, features, functions and/or properties disclosed herein. Inventions embodied in various combinations and subcombinations of features, functions, elements, and/or properties may be claimed through presentation of claims in a subsequent application.

What is claimed is:

1. A movable game piece comprising:

a movement portion adapted to enable movement of the game piece along a playing surface, the movement portion including a rotatable component mounted within a housing;

a character portion having character indicia; and

a fastening mechanism adapted to removably couple the character portion to the movement portion.

2. The game piece of claim 1, wherein the fastening mechanism is configured to press fit the character portion to the movement portion.

3. The game piece of claim 2, wherein the fastening mechanism includes a telescoping ledge configured to seat against the movement portion.

4. The game piece of claim 3, wherein the ledge is located approximately 0.02-0.03 inches from an engagement edge of the character portion.

5. The game piece of claim 2, wherein the fastening mechanism includes an angled region on at least one of the character portion and the movement portion.

6. The game piece of claim 1, wherein the fastening mechanism includes one or more protrusions extending from one of the character portion and the movement portion and adapted to insert into one or more apertures in the other of the character portion and the movement portion.

7. The game piece of claim 1, wherein the fastening mechanism is configured to couple the movement portion and the character portion when the character portion is moved laterally relative to the movement portion.

8. The game piece of claim 1, wherein the character portion has a washable surface.

9. A game comprising:

a game board having a playing surface; and

a plurality of movable game piece components including:

one or more movement portions adapted to move along the playing surface;

one or more character portions; and

one or more fastening mechanisms each adapted to interchangeably couple one of the character portions to one of the movement portions.

10. The game of claim 9, wherein the character portions have permanent character indicia.

11. The game of claim 9, wherein the character portions each include a character figure extending from an upper surface of the character portion.

12. The game of claim 9, wherein the fastening mechanisms are configured to press fit one of the character portions to one of the movement portions.

13. The game of claim 12, wherein the fastening mechanisms include one or more telescoping ledges.

14. The game of claim 13, wherein the movement portions have a rotatable component mounted within a housing and the one or more telescoping ledges are configured to suspend a region of the character portion away from the movement portion such that the character portion does not contact the rotatable component.

15. The game of claim 9, wherein the fastening mechanisms include hook-and-loop material.

16. The game of claim 9, wherein the game board includes one or more means for tallying a score.

17. The game of claim 9, wherein the game board includes one or more barriers configured to restrict movement of a game piece.

18. A method of playing a table game comprising:

providing a game board having a playing surface imprinted with board indicia;

providing a plurality of movement portions and character portions adapted to be coupled together;

selecting and coupling a character portion having character indicia to a movement portion to form a game piece;

urging the game piece along the playing surface from an initial position towards a final position; and

tallying points as indicated by the board indicia associated with the final position of the game piece.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the points are tallied as determined by a combination of the board indicia and character indicia.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein a subset of character indicia from which one of the character portions is selected is determined by a prior point tally.

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