Charm Bracelets Encyclopedia Article

Charm Bracelets

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While charms and amulets, trinkets and tokens to ward off evil, were worn on the body in ancient Egyptian civilization and virtually every other early culture, the twentieth-century charm is far removed from such apotropaic forms. Rather, modern charms are often signs of travel, place, and popular culture, suggesting sentiment and affinity more than prophylaxis. Their peak came in the 1930s when silver or base-metal charms could be accumulated over time and in hard times constituted affordable jewelry. Bakelite and other new materials could also make charms even less expensively. By the 1950s, charm bracelets were chiefly associated with high-school girls and the prospect of being able in high-school's four years to fill all the links of a bracelet with personal mementos. A 1985 fad for the plastic charm bracelets of babies—letter blocks and toys—worn by adults for infantilizing effect lasted less than a year.