



In a Doll's World

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Dolls have captivated the human imagination for centuries. Paddle-shaped dolls dating back to 2000 BC have been found in Egyptian tombs. Dolls have been constructed out of virtually every material known to humankind including bone, ivory, wax, wood, terracotta, plastic, rubber, old socks, and inner tubes. A baby doll on display at the Museum of Childhood in Edinburgh, Scotland, is an old shoe, sole up, with a face made out of thumbtacks and a piece of fabric for its blanket. Its worn appearance is a testimonial to frequent use and creates an aura of affection and significant play.

Play is key to the function of dolls and doll making. Children's play enables their developing bodies, minds, and emotions to experience a constructive channel of growth and enrichment. As miniature humans, dolls automatically shift the power scale from the adult to the side of the

child. Suddenly in control, children can manipulate their playthings and project their imaginations and longings onto their inanimate friends.

In some instances, dolls function in a parallel manner for adults. Dolls are used for magical or spiritual purposes as well as are representing a playful or wistful side of adult life.

Russian Dolls

Straw dolls from Russia were created in the central agricultural districts. Children wore small, straw dolls tied to their necks, wrists, and waists. The use of natural materials extended to the northern forest regions where dolls were made out of pine cones, birch bark, and dried moss tied with linen string.

Eskimo Dolls

Eskimo dolls are made out of soapstone and bone, materials that are available in the northern climate of Alaska.

They are clothed with animal furs and sealskin. Their clothing articulates the traditional style of dress necessary to survive cold winters, wind, and snow.

Navajo Dolls

Navajo dolls exhibit a style of clothing that Navajo women copied from American society in the 1860s. Lincoln's wife and friends wore full dresses made out of satin. Navajo women copied the patterns but substituted velvet for the satin and made buttons out of nickels and dimes.

Japanese Dolls

In Japan, some dolls relate to luck, like the *daruma* doll, a round doll composed of a head and body. Daruma represents Bodhidharma, an East Indian whose limbs withered after prolonged meditation. This doll represents fortitude, continued prosperity, and good fortune. Frequently daruma dolls are purchased without eyes. When the owner has a stroke of good luck, the first eye is painted on the face, and with more good luck, the second eye is created.

Materials for Bendable Dolls

- newspaper
- 18" (45 cm) baling wire
- masking tape
- fabric strips
- 8 x 8" (20 x 20 cm) pieces of fabric
- feathers
- buttons
- beads
- glue
- scissors
- pom-poms,
- pipe cleaners or string

Materials for Simple Dolls

- newspaper
- 8 x 6" (20 x 15 cm) pieces of fabric
- 16 x 16" (40 x 40 cm) pieces of fabric
- pipe cleaners or string
- scissors
- glue
- buttons
- beads
- pom-poms
- sequins



African Dolls

Across the African continent, dolls are created for young girls to play with and as a charm to insure fertility for women. Their shape and costume vary according to region and custom. Dolls are often handed down from mother to daughter. Western dolls are popular in Africa and are often dressed in traditional garb.

Kachina Dolls

Hopis use Kachina dolls to embody the characteristics of the Kachina, powerful spirits of earth, sky, and water. These dolls are important educational tools for children, making unseen ideas and concepts visible.

Simple Dolls

In this lesson, students will:

- learn about how dolls represent the cultures they come from.
- be able to discuss the physical qualities of different dolls.
- create a figure using fabric and mixed media.

Motivation

Begin by asking students, "What is a doll?" Continue the discussion with additional questions such as what are dolls for? Why are they important? What kind of dolls do you like to play with? Is it important to play? Why else do people have dolls?"

Present students with several different types of dolls. They could be dolls from your personal collection or ones that students bring in from home. Discuss the different characters, their physical qualities, how they were made, and what they tell us about the culture from which they come. Then ask a question like, "How can we make a doll using materials we have available to us?"

Procedures

1. Roll up a piece of newspaper into a ball. Place it in the center of the 16 x 16" fabric.
2. Gather the fabric around the ball. Tie it with string.
3. Roll the 8 x 6" fabric into a cylinder.
4. Attach it to the neck with a pipe cleaner.
5. Separate the fabric under the arms to make legs. Tie the feet.
6. Use beads, buttons, sequins, and pom-poms to decorate.

Bendable Dolls

Below are instructions for creating another kind of simple doll.

Procedures

1. Roll newspaper into a long tube.
2. Fold wire over the end. Twist it together (think candy cane).

3. Repeat. You should have two.
4. Cross the sticks in the middle. Twist them so they stay together. Tape the top and bottom of the twisted area.
5. Crumple newspaper to make a head. Tape it to the body.
6. Cover the head with 8 x 8" fabric. Secure with a pipe cleaner. Wrap fabric strips tightly for skin.
7. Decorate with extra fabric, buttons, beads, etc.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Use the dolls as a basis for a story or a play. Have students create names and identities for their dolls and then create a plot. They can write their story or play and read or perform it in front of the class (language arts).

Create drawings or collages with the dolls as the subject. Have students pose their dolls, then draw them in their positions or make torn-paper collages that describe the way the dolls look. Display the work with the dolls and discuss the relationships between the three-dimensional and two-dimensional work (creative arts).

Have students pick a country or cultural group to study. They can find images of dolls or actual dolls from the countries or cultures of choice. Students then research the costumes and cultural traditions and report on their findings (social studies).

Have students weigh and measure the dolls they made, then make Venn diagrams that illustrate commonly shared characteristics such as eye color, hair color, height, and weight (mathematics).

Have students research dolls from different countries or cultures and create maps that describe where they live (geography).

Have students investigate doll costumes and what they are made from. They can list the raw materials and note whether most of them come from plants or animals. Discuss the relationship between costume and environment (science).

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