

## MATERIALS

### Dolls for Younger Children:

- fabric 8" x 6", fabric 16" x 16", newspaper, scissors, glue, buttons, beads, pom poms, sequins, yarn, pipe cleaners or string

### Bendable Dolls for 9 Year Olds and Up:

- newspaper, baling wire - 2 pieces about 18" long, masking tape, fabric strips 1.5" wide, fabric 8" x 8", feathers, buttons, beads, yarn, glue, scissors, pom poms, pipe cleaners or string

## RESOURCES

- Museum of International Folk Art - online collections  
<http://collection.internationalfolkart.org/collections>
- St. Joseph Museum - Dolls of the World  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/dolls-of-the-world/YAJCv0Fjm2G4Iq>

## VOCABULARY (Definitions on page 3)

- **Characteristics**
- **Costume**
- **Culture**
- **Environment**
- **Features**
- **Representation**
- **Society**

## NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

- **Creating:** Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.
- **Presenting:** Interpreting and sharing artistic work.
- **Responding:** Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.
- **Connecting:** Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.



International Procession, Europe, Africa, China, Native American, Latin American, Girard Collection, Museum of International Folk Art Photograph by Michel Monteaux

# Dolls From Around the World

## INTRODUCTION

Dolls have captivated the human imagination for centuries. Paddle shaped dolls dating back to 2000 B.C. have been found in Egyptian tombs. Dolls have been constructed out of virtually every material known to humankind including bone, ivory, wax, wood, terra cotta, plastic, rubber, old socks and inner tubes.

Play is key to the function of dolls and doll-making. 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.

## OBJECTIVES

- To learn about how dolls represent the cultures they come from (historical and cultural understanding).
- To be able to discuss the physical qualities of different dolls (perceiving, analyzing and responding).
- To create a figure using fabric and mixed media (creating and performing).

## MOTIVATION

- Begin by asking your students, “What is a doll?” Continue the discussion with additional questions: 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 the students with several different types of dolls. They could be dolls from your personal collection or ones that the children 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?”

## PROCEDURE

### Dolls for Younger Children:

1. Roll up a piece of newspaper into a ball. Place it in center of the 16" x 16" fabric. This is the head.
2. Gather the fabric around the ball. Tie it with string. This makes the neck.
3. Roll the 8' x 6" fabric into a cylinder, to make the arms.
4. Attach the arms 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 for 9 Year Olds and Up:

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.



## EVALUATION

- Have the students share their dolls by introducing them to the group. A simple, "Hi, my name is Sandstorm and I live in the desert. I have a pet scorpion and I like to eat cactus," is great.
- Create a doll display. Have students write labels that describe their dolls. They can include information about their identities, clothing and methods of construction. Pin the dolls onto a bulletin board or display them on a shelf with the appropriate labels.

## EXTENSIONS & 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).
- 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 research dolls from different countries or culture groups and create maps that describe where they live (Geography).

## VOCABULARY

1. **Characteristics** - special aspects or qualities that describe a person, animal or object.
2. **Costume** - a style of dress that relates to a particular country or group of people.
3. **Culture** - ways of living that have been developed by a group of people that are passed on through generations.
4. **Environment** - a surrounding area
5. **Features** - parts of the face such as nose, ears, chin and mouth.
6. **Representation** - making a likeness of, creating one thing that stands for something else.
7. **Society** - a group of people living together as a community.



Navajo Dolls. Arizona, United States. ca 1970. Museum of International Folk Art

# Dolls From Around the World

Dolls found in the collection of the Museum of International Folk Art represent the society and culture from which they originate. They are created out of materials that are accessible to a particular people and reflect the dress, style and values of that group.

## Russian Dolls

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

## Alaska Native People Dolls

Alaska native people 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 show a style of clothing that Navajo women copied from east coast American society in the 1860's. Abraham Lincoln's wives 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. These stylish skirts are still fashionable today, for Navajos and non-natives alike.

## Japanese Dolls

In Japan, some dolls relate to good fortune. One example of this is 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. The owner sets a goal and paints in one eye to mark the setting of this intention. When the goal is achieved, the second eye is painted on the face to indicate success and give thanks.



Inupiaq doll, mother and child by Maggie Komonaseak. Alaska, United States. 2nd half, 20th century. Gift of Patricia M. Newman, Museum of International Folk Art



Daruma Doll. Japan, Asia. ca1960. Gift of the Girard Foundation Collection, Museum of International Folk Art

# Dolls From Around the World



Assorted Brazilian Dolls, photo by Ruth LaNore.

## Rag Dolls of Northeastern Brazil

Rag dolls are sold in markets throughout northeastern Brazil, especially in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco. They are generally made by women, who have learned the craft from their mothers or grandmothers and pass it on to their own daughters. Many of the dolls from Bahia portray Afro-Brazilian women clothed in the traditional dresses, head wraps, and jewelry worn in that region. The rag dolls from Pernambuco wear typical clothing made from selected scraps of fabric and come in all shapes and sizes.

## African Dolls

African dolls across the continent 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. Frequently dolls are handed down from mother to daughter. Western dolls are popular in Africa and are often dressed with traditional garb.



Dolls. Luxor, Egypt, Africa. 1993. Museum of International Folk Art

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<http://collection.internationalfolkart.org/collections>

St. Joseph Museum - Dolls of the World  
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