

PrimitiveSemi-Flat Dolls

(art + history; art + social studies)

The fact that toys were very different in previous cultures does not always occur to the children of today. Instead, they may think that computer games and plastic toys have been around since the beginning of time.

Dolls in Colonial America were made of fabric and dressed to reflect everyday life. Native American dolls were made by hand from animal hides and cloth, and decorated with paint made from berries, charcoal and other materials found in nature. Many were embellished with carved animals, feathers, bones and sticks. Often, they were made from flat-shaped pieces of leather sewn together in animal and human forms, representing mythical heroes.

The bright, colorful dolls in this lesson are made by children of the 21st century incorporating doll-making techniques of previous centuries.



Grade Levels 4-6

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Process

1. Fold the canvas sheet in half and draw a simple outline of a person or animal. Make the body and appendages as large as possible to accommodate filling them with Flufferfill. Cut the doll out on the outline through the two thicknesses of canvas. These represent the back and front of the doll.

Materials

Blick® Studio Canvas Pad, 12" x 16" (07400-1046), 10-sheet pads; need one sheet per student

Blickrylic™ Mixing Color Set, six colors (00711-1039); share one set across classroom

Blickrylic™ Student Acrylics need one pint of each:
Bright Red (00711-3076)
Fluorescent Green (00711-7266)
Violet (00711-6506)

Plastic Paint Tray, package of 10 (03090-1010); need one per student

Dynasty® Fine Sapphire Synthetic Round Brush Set, (05197-0729); share one 72-piece canister across classroom

Elmer's® Glue-All, 16-oz bottle (23810-1006); share eight bottles across classroom

Snippy Scissors, pointed (57040-2009), package of 12, need one pair per student

Spotted Guinea Feathers, bag of approx. 640 assorted (61401-6409); share one bag across classroom

Polyester Flufferfill, (66902-1006); share two 16-oz bags across classroom

Blick® Yarn Barn with Caron Knitting Yarn (65204-1009); share across classroom

Assorted Scrap Felt and Fabric

Large Plastic Paperclips

Paper Towels

Small Water Containers

Process, continued

2. Glue the two doll pieces together along the edges, keeping the primed sides of the canvas on the outside. At this point, insert hair (made of yarn, feathers, fabric or felt scraps) between the two pieces of canvas as you are gluing. Leave a 2" section open along the side of the body so that the Flufferfill can be inserted. Apply pressure to the glued edges by attaching large paper clips along the edges. Let the doll dry for about three hours.
3. While the glue is drying, draw details on the doll's front and back. Cut clothing from scrap canvas, felt and fabric to be glued on later.
4. Remove the paper clips. Paint the dolls, canvas clothing and accessories with acrylic paints. When the paint is dry, glue the clothing and accessories to the doll.
5. Tear the Flufferfill into small pieces and push the pieces into the doll's body, arms, legs and head using the handle of a paint brush or a pencil. Do not overstuff!
6. Glue the side opening together and secure it with paper clips until dry (2-3 hours).

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places

5-8 Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts