

R.U.S.S.I.A

Flax Dolls



World-wide, dolls are created as an impetus for imaginative play. Doll making is a popular Russian craft. People in the countryside made dolls during the winter to earn extra money. In the agricultural regions of central Russia, children tied small straw dolls to their necks, wrists, and waists. In the forest regions and northern Russia, people made dolls out of pine cones, birch bark, and dried moss. In western Russia, advanced plaiting techniques were utilized to create dolls out of flax and straw. Flax dolls wore a variety of costumes and were engaged in many activities, from playing the accordion or the guitar to holding babies or farming tools.

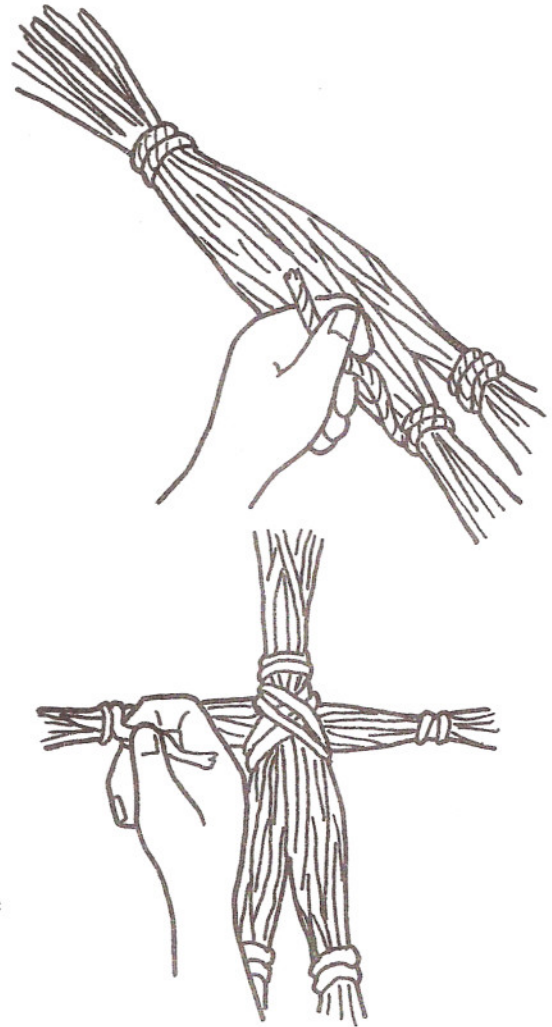
HOW TO MAKE A Flax Doll

Materials

- straw, twigs, pine needles, or yarn
- yarn, thread, or pipe cleaners
- glue
- scissors

Directions

1. To form the head, body, and legs, gather together a bundle of like-size pieces of straw or other material. The bundle should be at least 1 inch thick.
2. Tie the bundle together at the neck by wrapping it with yarn, thread, or a pipe cleaner.
3. The part below the neck serves as the body and the legs. Separate the lower section into 2 legs. Wrap and tie yarn, at the ankles. (Add more straw to the legs if you need to.)
4. Gather another bundle of straw to use for the arms. Attach it to the body at the chest by criss-crossing and then tying yarn around the arm bundle and the body.
5. Make hands by wrapping and tying yarn at the wrists.
6. Add facial features by gluing yarn pieces onto the head.
7. Use pipe cleaners and yarn to add any costume elements (belts, hats, etc.) or to make tools (rakes, canes, etc.).



Follow-up

- Display by tacking the dolls onto a bulletin board in your classroom or school. Have your students write descriptive pieces about their dolls.
- Use the dolls as an impetus for writing dialogue. Break up your class into small groups. Let the students use their dolls to initiate conversations that they record in writing or on tape.