

History of Dolls

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Introduction

The word doll has changed over the years:

1550's – endearing name for a female pet or a mistress or a form of Dorothy

1778 – a pretty, silly woman

1867 – to pet and indulge

1906 – dress up

According to 2018 dictionary.com a small figure representing a baby or other human being, a person that is considered attractive, an affectionate or familiar term, or a generous or helpful person.

Some slang for doll is: babe, baby doll and bimbo.

History

There is archaeological evidence that dolls were the oldest known toys. They were made from materials that were available like clay, stone, wood, bone, ivory, leather or wax. Dolls differ in regard to the culture that invented them, their purpose, imagination of the doll maker and fashion of the moment.

Perhaps the oldest doll or doll fragments were found from the Babylonian period and were parts of an alabaster doll. Pottery and wooden, clay, stone, bone, ivory, leather or wax dolls were found in ancient Egyptian graves that date back to 3,000 B.C. These dolls were intended for religious or ritual use, often depicting the gods and goddess of their worship. Girls in ancient Greece played with dolls made of baked clay or wood. Some had movable limbs that date from 200 B.C. and documents from 100 B.C. show dolls as children's toys. The dolls were often made at the time of a girl's upcoming marriage. The doll was then offered to Artemis, the goddess of fertility. It was believed that the doll represented the girl. She was offering herself as a vessel for childbearing. If a woman died before marrying, the doll was buried alongside her. There were also dolls that had religious symbols on them representing the deities of their worship called "daidala". The Greek and Roman girls dedicated their dolls to a goddess. Some dolls were never given to the children because it was believed that they were too charged with magical powers.

Many cultures have different types of dolls that were never intended to be used as playthings. They have been used to represent coming of age, as an offering for the hope of fertility and in some cases used to absorb the energy of someone and create magic.

People that were deemed "pagan" by other religion's leaders have had ritual magic uses for dolls that date back centuries. It is believed that a doll made from items that a person owns from bits of their hair can be absorbed by that person's energy. These dolls are called "poppets". In magic, it is believed that anything put forth will come back times three, so a poppet used to create something negative for a person increases the negative energy to the one making it. They can be made from any material and are often filled with stones, herbs, anything that represents the energy that is being created. Haitian voodoo rites often involve the making of these dolls and believe wholeheartedly in their ability to connect with the person they represent.

Africa also has a history of using dolls as religious symbols and in coming of age ceremonies. The dolls were often adorned with beautiful, intricate headwork and passed down from Mother to daughter or daughter-in-law throughout generations. The designs and shapes were unique to each tribe and often represented religious deities and rituals. The Ndebele, located in Zimbabwe would craft dolls to represent different stages of womanhood. Dolls wearing an apron meant that the girl who owned it was able to be married. When they were ready for marriage, part of the custom was to have a doll to care for as if it were an actual child. Whatever name the doll was given, the first born child was also given that name.

Dolls have been a popular toy for many years. Girls in the Middle Ages were known to have played with dolls. In the 16th century the wooden dolls were dressed in miniature clothes and they were a popular toy. In the 17th century the dolls were wooden, rag or wax. In this time period the dolls were called toy babies. Sometime in the 18th century their name was changed to dolls.

The first doll house was made in Germany in 1558. It was made for Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria. Doll houses were popular with the wealthy in the 17th century. At this time period the doll houses were not toys but were for display. In the 19th century doll houses became toys.

With industrialization in the 19th century dolls began to be mass produced. Rag, wooden and wax dolls were still being made but now they are also making dolls of papier-mache or ceramic. The dolls heads are now being made of porcelain and are attached to the bodies made of leather, cloth, wood or composite.

In Europe during the 19th century wood was the main material for doll making. Also in Europe the glass eyes of the dolls were mainly brown until the Victorian era (beginning of the 19th century) when Queen Victoria inspired popularity of blue eyes.

In 1863 dolls were sometimes made of celluloid, a form of plastic. In 1823 Johann Maelzel made the first talking dolls. They said 'momma' and 'papa'. In the late 19th century doll prams were made. Kewpie dolls went on sale in 1912. After World War II dolls were commonly made of vinyl. Barbie dolls were invented in 1959 and Action Man went on sale in Britain in 1966.

Haunted Dolls

Here are some stories about some haunted dolls. One of the most famous of these is Robert the Doll. Robert was given to a boy named Eugene Otto in 1896. According to legend, his caregiver was a woman who practiced magic. It is also said that this woman became angry with the family and placed a curse on Robert. The family then said that Eugene began acting strangely, appearing to have actual conversations with Robert.

The doll was packed away in the attic. Eugene died in the 1970's and the house was sold to another family. They had a daughter and when they discovered Robert tucked away in the attic, they gave it to her to play with. She then started having episodes of screaming fits at night saying that Robert was moving around the room and frightening her. The girl, who is now an adult, maintains that the doll was "haunted". Today, Robert is on display in the Fort East Martello Museum in Key West, Florida.

There is Annabelle, the famous haunted Raggedy Ann Doll that was believed to be possessed by something evil and like Robert is locked away in a museum. Even the Barbie doll is in on the action with one in Pulau Ubin in Singapore that is revered as the spirit of a long dead German girl. She was, according to legend, tragically killed falling off a cliff escaping the British Army that had captured her parents. A temple was built to pacify her spirit and the doll was placed there some years later.

Historical Dolls

Wooden Paddle Dolls are one of the oldest dolls found. They were discovered in Ancient Egyptian tombs that date from 2000 B.C. It was a flat doll made of wood in a stylized shape of a woman which emphasized the hips and hair. It is decorated with geometric pattern of lines and dots. One theory says that a Paddle Doll is a symbol of fertility and because it was found at burial sights of the Egyptian Predynastic period, they symbolize rebirth. Other theories say these dolls were to be companions of the deceased in the underworld and provide protection and entertainment.

African Dolls were methods of education, messengers of gods and ancestors and ritual tools. Effigy was a method of performing magic that was well known in African, Native American and European cultures. Some of the examples of effigy dolls were European poppet and the nhisi or bocio of West and Central Africa. They often represented persons on which the spell is cast. Sticking pins in voodoo dolls is characteristic of African and American Hoodoo magic while the kitchen witch, a poppet originated in Northern Europe, was used as a method for bring good luck.

Japanese Traditional Dolls have a long history. They originate from the time of ancient jomon culture (8000-200 B.C.). They had multiple roles and were used as toys, for protection, in religious ceremonies, as symbols of wealth and lucky charms. Some of the Japanese traditional dolls are Hina, Daruma and Koheshi dolls.

Koheshi Dolls are Japanese dolls, handmade from wood. There are two types: traditional and creative. The “traditional” Koheshi dolls are very simple in their design with round heads and cylindrical limbless bodies. The creative Koheshi Dolls are more shapely and in different colors. They were originally souvenirs for Japanese tourists but today are artistic folk art.

Matryoshka Doll or Russian nesting or nested doll is a doll made of wood that can be separated vertically in half and holds inside another similar but smaller dolls that in turn holds another similar doll and so on. Matryoshka most commonly have 3 to 12 dolls in one set. The first Matryoshka was made in 1890 in the time of both social unrest and emerging national identity for Russia and the development of Russian style. The idea was to save tradition which was in danger to be lost to time. The Matryoshka dolls represent a mother and her family.

Today’s designs of Matryoshka have a wide range of designs and modern Matryoshka are painted in different styles from fairy tale characters to politicians including floral or religious, likeness of famous people, real or imaginary and even national landmarks. Nesting toys are an idea that is thousands of years old and they came from China. There are nesting boxes and they date back to the Song Dynasty around 1000 B.C.

Iroquois Corn Husk Dolls were used as children's toys; however, they also had ritual uses as well. The Iroquois believed that making a doll after a particularly bad dream, then giving it back to the earth would take the evil of the dream away. Another Iroquois legend speaks of the dolls having no face. This legend tells about the corn being one of the Three Sisters and the "little people" being her creation. She was said to have made one doll very beautiful. When this creation saw a reflection of herself in a pool of water, she became vain of her looks. The Great Spirit punished her by decreeing that none of them should have any face at all.

Kachina Dolls are figures made by the Hopi Indians. Kachina figures were a teaching tool for the children about the Hopi religion, so every home had their own. While some dolls represent people or animals, others represent natural forces or the deceased ancestors of the Hopi. These dolls also represent messengers of the gods that came to the Hopi people once a year to bring rain. They are decorated with feathers, hair, and sticks. There are hundreds of Kachinas. The Heard Museum in Phoenix and the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles are now home to the major collections of Hopi Kachina figures.

Clowns also participate in the Hopi celebrations and sacred rituals. They have dual functions. Their most prominent role is to amuse the audience during outdoor celebrations and the Kachina Dance. The Koshare or Tewa clown and the Koysmsi or Mudhead are two of the most popular clown dolls.

Ball-jointed Dolls are a type of articulated doll whose parts are interconnected with ball and socket joints. They are made out of polyurethane synthetic resin, a type of hard plastic and the parts are strung together with elastic. The oldest articulated dolls were made in Ancient Greece and Rome. They were made out of clay and wood and had arms and legs connected to the body with wire. The first articulated dolls were bisque dolls made in the 19th century and early 20th century France and Germany. They were made of composition, a mix of pulp, sawdust and glue and had joints. The first commercially produced Asian ball-jointed dolls were made by a Japanese company Volks and were called Super Dollfie. In 2002 two South Korean companies, Customhouse and Cerberus Project began manufacturing them. The first Chinese produced ball-jointed dolls were outright copies of Super Dollfie or Korean ball-jointed dolls. The first original Chinese ball-jointed doll was produced in 2006 by Dollzone Company. In 2007 "Goodreau Doll" was the first company from the United States to produce them.

Porcelain Dolls are made of glazed and unglazed porcelain. China mastered the art of creating porcelain two thousand years ago. The first dolls created from porcelain were called **China Dolls** and they featured fully glazed porcelain. The majority of the dolls created this way during the 19th century featured porcelain only on their heads and shoulders. The rest of the doll was made from wood, sometimes with joints that enabled articulation. The wood part of the doll was hidden behind elaborate clothing. Later models added porcelain hands and feet, while some were made fully from porcelain.

Bisque porcelain was made from raw ceramic material. Bodies of the early Bisque porcelain dolls were usually made from a mix of various materials, including wood, cloth, leather or paper-mache. Full porcelain dolls were rare and expensive. They were very heavy and could easily break, particularly in the joints. The main purpose of other materials for body construction was to insure better robustness, articulating joints and longer durability.

Apple Dolls are dolls of North Americans which had heads made from dried apples.

Pennywoods are carved wooden dolls and rag dolls made by settlers.

Clay Dolls were made in Germany in the 13th century and wooden in the 15th century. In the 16th century France made dolls with fashionable clothes but of the simpler design.

Peg Wooden Dolls appeared in Germany and the Netherlands at about the same time.

Waldorf Doll is a doll which was used in Waldorf education. This school is founded on the teaching of Rudolf Steiner. The Waldorf Doll is sometimes also called the Steiner Doll. This doll consists of natural materials, like cotton and wool, and with a plain face. It is a doll that stimulates the imagination of a child.

Puppets are a special type of doll. They are made to be animated and often to tell a story. There are many variants of puppets, each one differently made and controlled.

Paper Dolls are simple dolls but their appeal is not in its simplicity but in imagination which is needed to make a paper doll something more than it is.

G. I. Joes is a series of action figures manufactured by Hasbro. It was designed and presented to the world for the first time in 1964. They were named for U.S. soldiers who have been in service since World War I. At that time, most of the equipment issued to U.S. soldiers was marked “G.I.” which meant that it was made of galvanized iron. Abbreviation was later used to mean “Government Issued”. Toys were called “action figure” because manufacturers believed that boys, for whom G.I. Joe was marketed, would not play with “dolls”.

The first G.I. Joes were manufactured from 1964-1969 and was called “G.I. Joe: America’s movable fighting man”. Prototypes were modeled after the main military branches and named “Rocky” (marine/soldier), “Skip” (sailor), and “Ace” (pilot). From 1970-1976 Hasbro tried to move focus from the Vietnam War that was just starting and disconnect it from the G.I. Joe line so they renamed it to “The Adventures of G.I. Joe” and later to “Adventure Team”. The action figures had “life-like” flocked hair and beard to make the figures more realistic. That technology was taken from Paletoy, a company from England to whom Hasbro had sold the rights for G.I. Joe and from which Paletoy made their line of “Action Man”. One more idea taken from Action Man was “Kung-fu Grip”. The hands were made from softer plastic which allowed them to hold objects in a more realistic way. “Adventure Team” action figures of G.I. Joe were made as generic soldiers with no idea of the team. In 1975 Hasbro made a bionic action figure “Mike Power, Atomic Man”. There was also “Bullet Man” and “Eagle Eye Joe”. There was a comic book included with the action figures.

In 1982-1994 they were called “G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero”. They had comic books, vehicles and play sets to go along with the action figures. Some of the other names for G.I. Joe between 1997-2013 were: “Stars & Stripes Forever-TRU Exclusives”, “G.I. Joes vs. Cobra”, “Direct to Consumer”, “25th Anniversary”, “The Rise of Cobra”, “The Pursuit of Cobra”, “33rd Anniversary” and “Retaliation”.

Reborn Dolls were manufactured in the United States in the first half of the 1990's. Reborn doll (Living Doll or Unliving Doll) is a vinyl doll so realistically made that it resembles a human baby. The dolls are sold in vinyl doll kits. You make the doll to be what you want it to be. Creators of reborn dolls are called reborners and creating of the doll is called reborn. Supplies, tools and accessories can be bought from doll manufacturers who make and sell them.

Barbie Dolls are a fashion doll made by Mattel. Barbie appeared on the market for the first time in 1959. She was designed by American businesswoman, Ruth Handler. Barbie dolls were inspired by the German doll Bild Lilli. Barbie dolls were named for Ruth's daughter. Barbie's first public appearance was at the American International Toy Fair in March, 1959. The first Barbie was made as a blonde or a brunette. She was dressed in a black and white zebra striped swimsuit and had a topknot ponytail.

These first dolls were manufactured in Japan and her clothes were hand-stitched by Japanese home-workers. During the first year, Mattel sold around 350,000 Barbie Dolls.

Barbie has changed over the years and each model is named by collectors or by Mattel. **Vintage Barbies** were made from 1959-1966. **Mod Barbies** are **Vintage Barbies** made from 1967-1973. **Malibu Barbie** was made from 1971-1977. From 1977 to well into the 1990's **Superstar Barbie** was made. The first **Black Barbie** was made in 1980. In 1988 Mattel introduced the **Holiday Barbie**. These dolls were inspired by various holidays, especially Christmas. The **Collectable Barbie** was made for adult collectors, as well as **Vintage Barbie Reproductions**. From 2000, Mattel started making the **Fashion Model Collection Barbies** also called **Silkstone Barbie Dolls**. From 2001, Mattel started classification of Barbie dolls by colors. There is the **Pink Label**, which are the play line inexpensive dolls and are available everywhere. **Silver Label**, which are collectible dolls which are manufactured in limited number. **Gold Label**, which are also collectable and also made in limited numbers but in fewer numbers than the Silver Label and **Platinum Label**, which are made in numbered edition of less than 1,000 and are available only from certain Barbie dealers.

Today Barbies are made in much different skin and hair colors and even different face sculptures. The latest line of Barbies is twelve **Black Label Basic Barbie Dolls** each with a different face sculpt.

Mr. Potato Head is a doll in the shape of a potato with parts like eyes, ears, mouth and arms that can be attached and detached from the body. It was designed in 1949 by George Lerner. Manufacturing began in 1952 by Hasbro. Mr. Potato Head was the first toy to be advertised on television. Before Mr. Potato Head, toys were advertised to adults because they were the ones paying for it. Mr. Potato Head was then advertised directly to children.

The first Mr. Potato Head was a "funny face man" that George made for his younger sister out of fruit and vegetables parts from his Mother's garden. When George tried to sell the idea to the toy companies no one wanted to buy the idea because using fruits and vegetables was considered irresponsible and wasteful in that time after the war because they were scarce. George's second idea was to make the eyes, ears, etc. out of plastic with pins for attaching, while the head of the toy would be a potato. He sold the idea for \$5,000 to a food company by convincing it to distribute the plastic parts as gifts in breakfast cereal boxes. In 1951, George showed the idea to brothers Henry and Merrill Hassenfeld, who had a small school supply and toy company called Hassenfeld Brothers, which they later called Hasbro. They liked the idea so they paid the cereal company \$2,000 to stop producing parts and for \$5,000 they bought the rights from them.

The first set sold had hands, feet, ears, two mouths, two pairs of eyes, four noses, three hats, eyeglasses, a pipe and eight felt pieces in the shape of facial hair. It had no body so the potato had to be provided so the parts could be stuck into it.

More than 1 million sets were sold in the first year. Mrs. Potato head was added in 1953 with Brother Spud and Sister Yam after that with accessories. Because little children choked and cut themselves on the Mr. Potato Head's parts, government regulations forced Hasbro to make less sharp parts which could not pierce potatoes anymore. Because of that Hasbro had to add a plastic potato for the body to the kit in 1964. Some similar fruit and vegetable toys were added by Hasbro. They were Oscar the Orange, Pete the Pepper, Katie Carrot and Cookie Cucumber.

Because of the safety regulations Hasbro increased the size of the parts and the body so that younger children could play with it. Mr. Potato Head had round holes but Hasbro changed it into flat holes so the parts could not be put into wrong holes. In 1980 Hasbro started selling parts in sets of one but returned to round holes.

Bobblehead is a collectable doll which has a characteristically oversized head that is connected to the body with springs or wire and when the head is lightly tapped it bobbles. Some of the alternative names are: bobbing heads, moving heads, noddors, nodding heads, ahabeko, wobblers and nodding heads.

Lammily – In 2014 Nicholay Lamm tried to find a doll with realistic body proportions. Since he couldn't find one he made a photo type of one using a 3D printer. Lammily stands for "Lamm" plus "family". These dolls are similar to Barbie Dolls. There are three options: Traveler (the original) looks like Billie Jean King; Photographer is like Michelle Obama and Animal Rescuer. You can purchase a sheet of reusable stickers that give your doll freckles, acne, cellulite, bruises, grass stains, mosquito bites and a tattoo. You can also buy a wheelchair for your doll. Mr. Lamm feels that his dolls are an alternative to the skinny dolls.

Whether we enjoy them, collect them, or even fear them a little bit the fascinating history of dolls encompasses so much more than a treasured toy. They have represented many things since their inception and will continue to enthrall many of us for the years to come.