

Portable Collections Program

# Dolls of World Cultures



BROOKLYN  
**CHILDRENS**  
MUSEUM  
*touch the world!*

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List of Terms

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# What's in the Case?

## Objects



Schoolgirl rag doll  
(Hong Kong)



Female rag doll  
(Jamaica)



Female doll (Mexico)



Male doll (Senegal)



Dancing dolls (Poland)



Male rag doll  
(Cherokee, United States)



Male doll (Syria)

## Tools & Resources

World Colors: Dolls & Dress by Susan Hedrick and Vilma Matchette

World Crafts: Festivals by Meryl Doney

“Putomayo Presents: World Playground” audio CD

Inflatable Globe and Pump

## How to Handle Museum Objects

Learning to handle objects from the Museum's permanent collection with respect can be part of your students' educational experience of the case. Please share these guidelines with your class, and make sure your students follow them in handling objects in the case:

- **Students may handle the objects, carefully, under your supervision.**
- **Hold the boxed dolls upright and with two hands.** One hand should be underneath the case.
- **Do not shake the plexiglass cases** the dolls are housed in.
- **Temperature differences, direct sunlight, and water can be very harmful to certain objects.** Please keep the objects away from radiators and open windows, and keep them secure.



## How to Look at Museum Objects

Objects have the power to fascinate people with their mere physical presence. Holding an object in their hands forms a tangible link between your students, the person who made it, and that person's homeland. This sense of physical connection makes it easier for students to think concretely about the ideas and concepts you introduce to them in your lessons.

Objects also have the power to tell us about their origins and purpose, provided we are willing to look at them in detail and think about what those details mean. Encourage your students to examine an object carefully, looking at its design and decoration. Have them describe its shape, size, and color. Ask them questions about what they see, and what that might tell them. For example, start by asking your students some of the following questions:

- What do you see in the object?
- What makes you say that? (It is important that your students use visual clues based on their observations when giving their answers.)
- What else can you see?

As the conversation begins to grow, you can ask questions about how the object was made:

- How do you think this object was made?
- What tools do you think the maker used?
- What materials did the maker use? Where might he or she have gotten those materials?
- How is the object decorated? What might the decorations mean?
- What does the object tell you about the person or people who made it?

Encourage students to base their answers on details they can see in the objects. This process encourages your students to be critical thinkers, and to form personal connections to art and different cultures, time and places. It also empowers students to talk about something they might think they are not familiar with.

## Studying World Cultures Through Dolls

### To the teacher

This set of dolls has been selected to facilitate the study of world and local **cultures**. The dolls represent seven different parts of the world (Native North America, Central America, Caribbean, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Asia). Although most represent adults, one is a child. There are male and female dolls. They are wearing everyday and festival clothing, “traditional” and contemporary dress. They also represent a few of the vast number of ways of making dolls.

### What can dolls teach us?

Dolls are miniature **representations** of human beings. They stand for us. They have long fascinated both children and adults, serving purposes from companionship to personal expression to statement of cultural and national pride. The dolls in this case are of a type known as “**ethnic**,” “regional,” or “costume” doll. They are not playthings and, to reassure the boys in your class, they are not “girl things” either. They represent the ethnic types and costumes of a particular national or cultural group. As such they lend themselves to studying world cultures, and by extension, the cultures of the wide range of immigrants in Brooklyn. The dolls open a child-friendly door to the cultures of other parts of the world, cultures that not only include particular clothing, but also music, culinary traditions, language, art, and customs. Through the dolls, commonalities and differences between the many communities represented in Brooklyn can be identified, discussed, and studied.

Dolls are often considered to be playthings, but they actually can serve very serious purposes, all of which derive from the fact that dolls are miniature people. Dolls appear to have been part of childhood throughout history and in all parts of the world. For children, dolls can be best friends and confidantes. They remind the child that she or he is not alone. Dolls may have similar characteristics to their owners or they may represent something a child aspires to be in the future.



Dolls often serve as actors in self-generated dramas that help children enact, understand, and feel some control over events and relationships in their lives. They also serve as a means for practicing adult roles and skills such as work and parenting. Dolls and figurines can also function as representatives of spiritual identity, faith and desire. Dolls can tell us many things about ourselves.

For adults, dolls can be symbols of cultural and national identity. For an immigrant, a costume doll may be a nostalgic reminder of a world left behind and a proud announcer of cultural identity. Costume dolls of many countries may serve as cultural ambassadors in international venues. They may be created in sets to represent job types or regional types within a country or to participate in a representation of an event such as a wedding procession. Making dolls can be a creative outlet for demonstrating craft skills, or a commercial enterprise, providing income from sales. In some cultures, dolls may also serve as fetishes and amulets, for example, expressing a desire for children or protecting against bad luck.

The sheer variety of dolls and their uses, in addition to their universal adoption by children, tells us that dolls are indeed worth our attention.

## Studying World Cultures Through Dolls (continued)

### Brooklyn and world cultures

The United States is made up of people from other places. Virtually everyone (except for Native Americans) came from somewhere else, even if they have been here for many centuries. People are still moving to the United States and settling here. Brooklyn is particularly rich in recent **immigrants**. At the time of the 2000 census, Brooklyn's population of 2.5 million people was 38% foreign-born, speaking 128 languages. The largest twenty groups by country of origin come from Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, but there are also thousands of people from Africa in Brooklyn. There are neighborhoods of Chinese, Russians and Ukrainians, Haitians, Jamaicans, Pakistanis, Guyanese, Mexicans, and Dominicans, among others. In your classroom and in the school's community, your students encounter people from many corners of the world. This multiplicity of cultures in Brooklyn is both a reason and a means for students to learn more about the culture of their family's country of origin and about the countries and cultures of others. Starting with themselves and their families is a natural approach for young children and the dolls of other countries in the case may serve only as contrasts or points of reference.

Older students may also respond well to the approach of starting with self and moving outward. Depending on the group, however, they may be ready to start by investigating directly the countries and cultures represented by the dolls. Studying dolls of other parts of the world can naturally lead to studying Brooklyn and self, and vice versa, as well as studying other countries and cultures elsewhere.

### Costume dolls and contemporary culture

In using the dolls to study cultures abroad and here in Brooklyn, it is important to convey that the dolls offer only one image of a culture that is varied and complex. Just like any **generalization** about a culture, these **costume dolls** are rooted in actual clothing that was worn in the past and in this sense they are "traditional." But in the modern global world "**traditional**" dress co-exists with or has been largely superseded by American-style clothing, especially in cities. For example, the women of Jamaica

do not all wear colorful printed dresses with baskets on their heads. Children from Jamaica may or may not identify with this image, although they will likely recognize the doll itself. Likewise, there are many local clothing traditions in Mexico, not just the one represented in the case. Folk dress may still be worn in rural Mexico, by Indian peoples, either every day or on market days; it is generally not worn by city-dwellers. Poland also had many local clothing traditions until the early twentieth century, but in the modern world, if traditional styles are worn at all it is only on special occasions in rural communities. Instead, in Poland, **folk** dress has been "revived" along with folk dancing to express a regional or

national identity. Such particular usages and history exist for clothing—and for other manifestations of culture such as food, music, art, and customs—in every part of the world; no one image conveys the complexity of any culture. You can help your students, as participants and observers of the particularities in their own cultures and those of their neighbors, to extend this recognition to more distant cultures. □

*Terms in bold are defined on page 19.*



## Information About the Objects in the Case

### SCHOOLGIRL RAG DOLL (Hong Kong)



(Object No. 67.117.1)  
Simply dressed in a school uniform, this doll represents a young girl in Hong Kong. She wears a blue cotton jumper (which has her initials embroidered on it), a long-sleeved white blouse, and black shoes.

Children in Hong Kong are required to attend school for nine to eleven years before going on to university. Schools there usually have strict rules about what students may wear, so practically all schoolchildren wear uniforms.

### FEMALE RAG DOLL (Jamaica)



(Object No. 72.13.1)  
Wearing a bright blouse, patchwork skirt, and floral headscarf, this rag doll represents a Jamaican woman in traditional everyday dress. Her light cotton clothing helps keep her cool in Jamaica's

tropical climate. She carries two red and yellow bundles in a basket on top of her head, so she may be on her way to or from the market. Head-baskets are common in Jamaica, and may be used to carry practically anything from coffee to bananas to sugarcane. The doll's white apron has "Jamaica" written on the waistband, suggesting that the doll was made for sale to tourists.

### FEMALE DOLL (Mexico)



(Object No. 95.5.5)  
With her long dark skirt and white *huipil*, this Mexican doll is wearing the traditional dress of the state of Oaxaca. A *huipil* is a rectangular blouse made of several lengths of uncut fabric sewn together length-

wise. Its front and back are usually embroidered or woven with floral or animal designs, and may also be decorated with ribbons. The *huipil* has been worn in Mexico since before the arrival of the Spanish,

and is still widely worn in southern rural Mexico. Women in Oaxaca may wear a simple *huipil* for everyday dress, and an elaborately decorated one for fiestas and special occasions.

### MALE DOLL (Senegal)



(Object No. 72.76.1)  
This doll from Senegal is swathed in a long, full robe known as a *boubou*. The *boubou* is traditional dress for both men and women in West Africa. Originally this robe was worn in the rural

savannah region because it protected the wearer against the hot sun, fierce winds, and unpredictable sandstorms. Now this style has moved from savannah to city, too; people wear boubous on the streets of Dakar, and all over Senegal and West Africa. This doll's *boubou* is decorated with embroidery at the collar and cuffs, and worn with a pair of long trousers and a red hat.

### DANCING DOLLS (Poland)



(Object No. 93.3.30ab)  
Posed together as if in the middle of a folk dance, this couple is dressed in the brightly colored traditional clothing of Krakow, a city in Poland. The woman wears a white blouse and skirt, and over her

braided hair sits a wreath of blue, green, yellow, and red flowers. Her partner is dressed in a white wool overcoat and a long blue vest, topped off with a square red hat trimmed with yellow and white ribbons and peacock feathers. While these dolls' clothing is typical of Krakow and the surrounding area, it is not typical of Poland as a whole; each region in Poland has its own local folk dress. Nor is their clothing typical everyday dress; most people only wear this sort of traditional costume for folk dances, weddings, festivals, and other important events.

Information About the Objects in the Case (continued)

**MALE RAG DOLL**



(Cherokee, United States)  
(Native American, North America) (Object No. 95.5.1b)  
Outfitted in olive green overalls and light blue striped shirt, this Cherokee rag doll is dressed in the sort of everyday clothing formerly worn by

men and boys in many rural parts of the U.S. His hair is done in traditional Cherokee style, gathered in two small bundles on either side of his head. By the early 1800s most Cherokee people had adopted European-style clothing. Traditionally they had worn buckskin garments, but thin cotton clothing was cooler and more comfortable during the sweltering Southern summers. Cherokee men wore shirts and trousers or overalls (like this boy), while women favored long calico dresses or skirts with blouses.

**MALE DOLL** (Syria)  
(Object No. 70.52.40a)



Dressed in a long silk robe known as a *gambaz*, this doll represents a man from Syria. His white headcloth is called a *kaffiyeh*, and is held in place with a black headband known as an *agal*. Underneath his *gambaz* he wears white

trousers called *shelwar*. His short overcoat (called a *jubbe*) is decorated with braid on the front and around the cuffs. On his feet he wears red leather boots (in Syria, red is believed to protect people from evil spirits). This doll's clothing is typical of traditional men's attire throughout the Middle East. It is suitable for everyday wear in the warm desert climate, protecting the wearer from the harsh sun during the day and from cool temperatures at night.

*You can learn more about these dolls and other objects from around the world by visiting our Collections Central Online database at [www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum](http://www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum).*

## ACTIVITY 1

# Introductory Activity: Showing Who I Am

### All Grades

### Related Objects: All

In this activity, students show how they represent themselves through their clothing and accessories, and what things define them as individuals and as members of a culture. The drawing activity may seem primarily intended for younger children, but older students will also find the idea of self-representation (particularly when it is focused on clothing and accessories) compelling and the contrasts between their images instructive.

### Materials:

- Paper doll template worksheets (see following page), two for each student
- Tag board
- Construction or drawing paper
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

### What To Do:

- 1 Have a discussion with your students about what they are wearing and what it might communicate about them. Have them identify things that represent their choices and things that may represent their religion or their family background. (See Discussion Questions below and in the next activity.)
- 2 Introduce the paper doll template and explain that they are going to dress the doll to be an image of themselves.
- 3 Using one of the paper doll templates, have students draw clothing and accessories that represent them on a school day. On the other template have them draw the clothing and accessories that they would wear on a special day. Alternatively, older children can draw their clothing pieces on a separate piece of drawing or construction paper, and cut them out afterward. They can attach the clothing to the paper doll by adding tabs that fold over the shoulders and body of the figure.
- 4 To make the dolls stand, have students paste their paper doll templates onto tag board or heavy paper. Then they should cut out the doll and the small semi-circular cross-brace on the template, slit it and the base of the figure along the dotted lines, and join the base and the cross-brace so that the dolls stand. (You may have to help younger students do this.) Alternatively, you can hang the dolls on a mobile made of hanger wire or tack them to a bulletin board.
- 5 Discuss with the class the images they have drawn, how special days are different from ordinary days, and what items are their choice, and what items are things that everyone in their family or group wears.
- 6 Have students plan a classroom display of their dolls. They may want to sort the dolls by categories such as ordinary and special day clothing, or geographic or cultural origin. Encourage them to be creative!

### Discussion Questions:

- What can people tell about you when they see your everyday attire? Probe students with questions about their clothing's suitability for weather and the source of the materials used to make it. These vary according to place and sometimes become part of a "tradition" when people go to new places. Ask about occasions when they wear special clothes—for religious events, school, clubs, sports, etc. Also pay attention to jewelry and accessories, such as religious medallions.
- What does your everyday clothing tell other people about your culture or country of origin? What is special about it?
- Do you have special clothing for holidays? For family events? What makes it different from what people of other backgrounds wear?

See page 21 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.

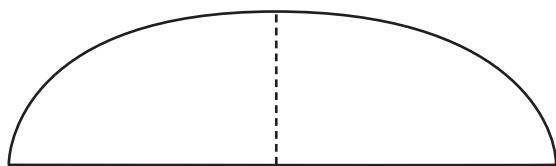
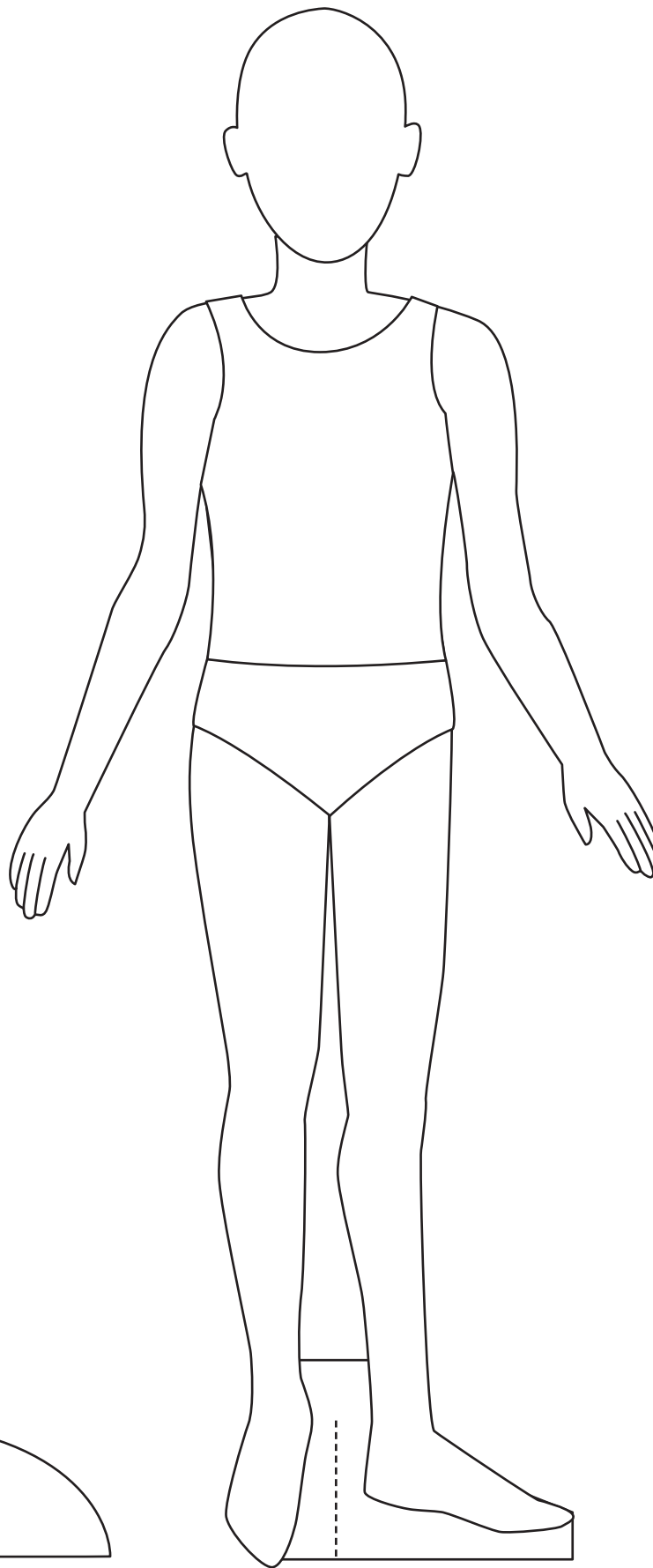
# Who am I today?

What can people tell about you based on what you wear?

What do you wear every day?

Do you have special clothing for holidays or events, for school, or for clubs and sports?

On the figure right, draw yourself wearing everyday clothing. On another copy of this worksheet, draw yourself wearing special clothing for a particular event.



## ACTIVITY 2

# What Can Objects Tell Me?

### All Grades

#### Related Objects: All

This activity encourages students to learn about the objects in the case through close observation. Do not tell the students where the dolls are from until after they have examined them and filled out the “What Can Objects Tell Me?” chart.

Depending on the age and interests of your students and the amount of time you would like to spend, you can do this activity individually, in small groups, or as a class.

#### Materials:

- Dolls from the case
- A copy of the “What Can Objects Tell Me?” chart for each student or group (OR a transparency of it for a whole class exercise)
- A large piece of chart paper for recording group observations

#### What To Do:

- 1 If you are doing this activity in small groups, position each doll at a different station in the classroom.
- 2 In discussion with the class, talk about dolls and what they mean. Introduce the idea that these dolls represent people from different countries. Define with students what “represent” means if you think they do not know. You may want to discuss and clarify other terms that are commonly used and can be easily misused when people talk about other cultures (see the List of Terms on page 19).
- 3 Distribute the “What Can Objects Tell Me?” chart and go over it with the students. Ask them to focus first on the physical properties of each doll, using their senses to determine its color, texture, the parts of its costume, type of decoration, and so on. You may want to practice with the class, using one of dolls as a demonstration.
- 4 Divide the students into as many groups as there are dolls and have each group examine their object and fill in the boxes of the chart. After a few minutes, have the groups rotate to a new station. Repeat this step

as many times as you like.

- 5 Have the students reconvene as a class to discuss their findings. You may want to use the chart paper to make notes about the students’ observations. Try to have students start their observations with physical characteristics. As these accumulate, they may begin to suggest which part of the world the doll might be from. When you feel they have gone as far as they can using what they observed, you can introduce information about each doll from this guide. You may also want to give older students a research assignment—to look up the dolls in the book included in the case, *World Colors: Dolls & Dress*, and try to identify them.
- 6 Ask your students why they think the dolls are wearing their particular clothes. Use their answers to discuss how social expectations and the environment affect how people dress from one part of the world to another.

**Modification for Grades K–3:** Approach this observation activity by playing “I Spy.” Select a doll from the case and start by saying “I spy with my little eye something \_\_\_\_” (for example, green). Ask the students to help you find that green item. It might be the overalls worn by the Cherokee doll or the Syrian doll’s overcoat.

#### Discussion Questions:

- What kinds of things can you learn about an object just by examining it closely?
- Are these really dolls? What do they “represent”? Do all the dolls represent adults? Are they male or female? Do you think they come from the same place?
- How is clothing the same or different in different parts of the world? Why might that be?
- What kinds of things do people wear to identify their religion? Their ethnicity? The place where they live?

See page 21 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.










#### LITERACY EXTENSION

Have each child choose one doll from the case and write a paragraph describing its clothing, and how the doll’s image and clothing indicate where the doll is from and what some features of that place are.

# What can objects tell me?

Look at each object carefully. What kinds of things can we learn about an object just by examining it closely? What do objects tell us about the people who made them? Use this chart to record everything you discover.

	What is the doll wearing? Name the parts, if you can, and the colors and decoration.	What is the doll dressed for? (What type of weather? Special occasion or everyday?)	Does the doll represent what real people wear?	Where do you think this doll is from? What makes you say that?
				
				
				
				
				
				
				

## ACTIVITY 3 Make a Doll

All Grades

Related Objects: All

Depending on the age of your students and the way you are integrating dolls into your curriculum, you may use this activity to have students represent themselves, or to research and represent someone from another country or culture. If the clothespin and aluminum foil dolls described below don't appeal to you, try searching the Internet or craft books for ways to make simple dolls using raffia, corn-husks, paper towel rolls, tongue depressors, fabric, or other materials.

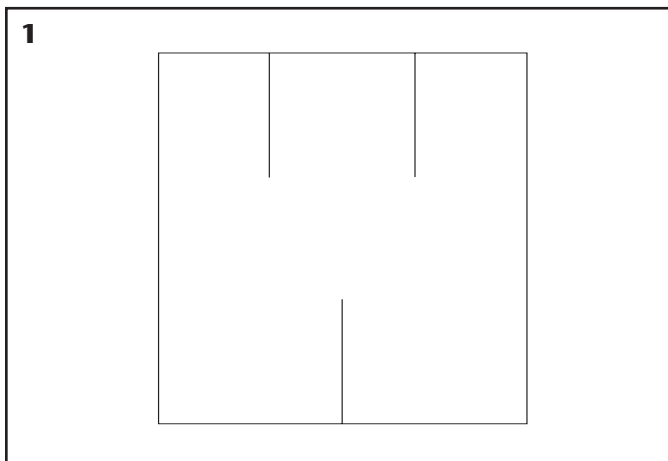
### CLOTHESPIN DOLL: Grades K-3

#### Materials:

- Clothespins, one per student
- Glue
- Scraps of fabric with interesting patterns
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Markers
- Pipe cleaners

#### What To Do:

- 1 Have children twist a pipe cleaner around the head of a clothespin in order to make the doll's arms.
- 2 Show them how to make simple shirts and dresses by folding pieces of fabric in half and cutting a half circle on the fold line to make a neck hole.
- 3 Students can use yarn to make hair for their doll, to trim its clothes, or to tie on its skirt or pants.
- 4 Once the dolls are dressed, students may draw their facial features using markers



### ALUMINUM FOIL DOLL: Grades 3-5

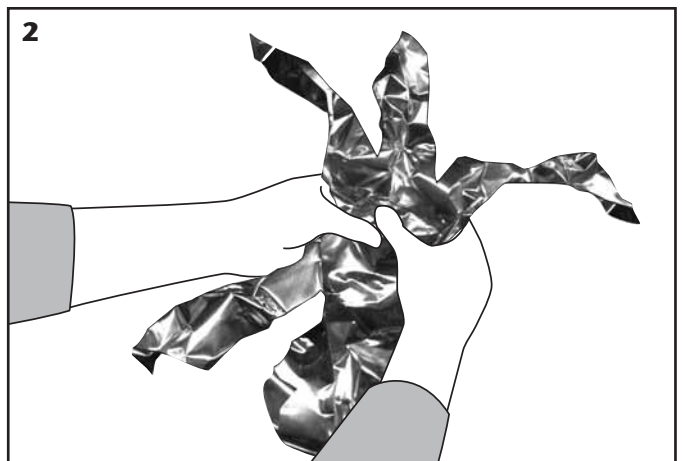
[www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/world.htm](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/world.htm) has images and suggestions for making several kinds of dolls (including this one).

#### Materials:

- Aluminum foil cut into 1 foot sections, one per student
- Masking tape
- Scraps of fabric, yarn, and paper
- Tempera paint
- Markers
- Squares of mat board, cardboard, or foam board

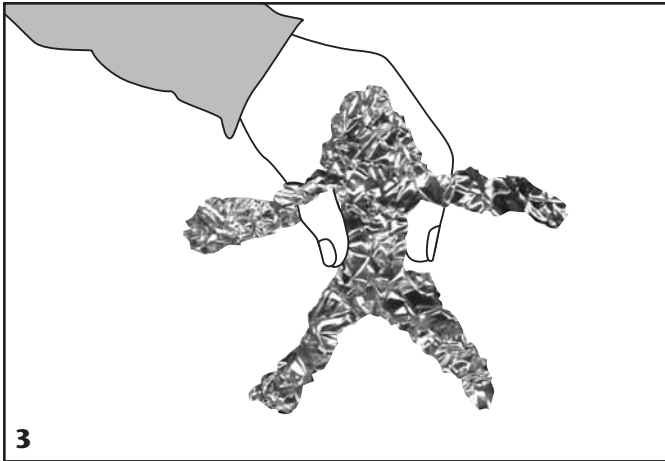
#### What To Do:

- 1 Ask your students to pick a country or culture they would like their doll to represent. Using the books in the case, resources in your school or local library, or the Internet, have them research what the doll should look like and how it ought to be dressed.
- 2 Give each student a piece of tin foil and have him or her mark lines and cut along them as shown in illustration 1.
- 3 Have students very lightly crumple the center of the foil and the extensions to create a body, head, arms, and legs, as shown in Illustration 2. All of these parts can be reinforced with added pieces of foil, as shown in Illustration 3.
- 4 Have students wrap masking tape around all the parts of the figure, giving it strength and extra size.
- 5 Paint the figures and let the paint dry.
- 6 When the paint is dry, students can add facial features using the markers (or, students can attach photographs of them own faces) and hair using pieces of yarn.



## ACTIVITY 3

### Make a Doll (continued)



- 7 Using the scraps of fabric, yarn, and paper (as well as any other found objects), have students cut clothing for their dolls according to the traditional or contemporary costume of the culture they have chosen. A rectangle of fabric with a hole in the middle can become a poncho; another rectangle can be wrapped around the torso and tied at the waist to create a skirt; smaller rectangles can be cut and rolled to create sleeves or trouser legs. Have students experiment and invent!

#### Discussion Questions:

- Where is your doll going to be from? How can you show that in its features and its costume?
- What kind of clothes does someone from that country wear?
- Is your doll wearing traditional or everyday clothing?

See page 21 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.



#### LITERACY AND CULTURE EXTENSION: GRADES K–3

- Names are usually culture-specific. Discuss with your students their names. Why did their parents pick their particular names? If students don't know, have them ask their parents. (You will, of course, need to be sensitive to children who are orphaned or for other reasons do not know their family history.) How are their names related to their culture? Do their names have particular meanings? Each day you can have several children present their names. By following the order of the alphabet as they learn about their names, you can also reinforce the ABC's.

#### GRADES 3–6

- Ask your students to investigate what names are used in the countries from which the dolls in the case come. You may want to divide the class into groups and have each group investigate one doll. They can use the Internet, library books, or ask people they may know from those cultures. The class can then decide on an appropriate name for each doll in the case, or the dolls they have made, according to its culture or country of origin. (For example, the Mexican doll from Oaxaca might be named Xochitl, which means "flower" in the indigenous language of Nahuatl.) Books such as *My Name Is Bilal* by Asma Mobin-Uddin and Article 7 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (which declares that every child has the right to a name) can be the basis for important discussions of identity and culture.

## ACTIVITY 4

# Make A World Travel Guidebook

**Grades 3–5**

**Related Objects: All**

This activity involves students in research to find out more about the countries of origin of the dolls in the case and learn about their traditions. It can also extend to countries from which the students or their families come. You can organize this as a whole class, small group, or individual project.

### Materials:

- Copies of the “World Travel Guidebook” worksheet (see following page)
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Magazines
- Library and Internet access
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks
- Stapler OR yarn and hole punch
- *Optional:* A guidebook to another country

### What To Do:

- 1** Ask students what kinds of things they might want to know when they are about to visit another country. Where would they find the answers to their questions? Ask if they have ever seen a travel guidebook. If you have one on hand, pass it around the classroom for them to examine.
  - 2** Explain to your students they are going to make a world travel guidebook, and outline how you plan to organize the project. For example, will they work individually or in small groups? What countries should they study? You may wish to assign them to study the dolls’ countries of origin, their own families’ countries of origin, or countries connected to other parts of your curriculum.
  - 3** Point out the resources students will have available for their research (such as materials from the case, the school library, or the internet). You and your students may want to visit our website at [www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum](http://www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum) to see additional objects related to the dolls’ countries of origin.
- 4** Hand out the World Travel Guidebook worksheets and get students started on their research. You may assign them to study Students should fill in the fact categories on the Guidebook page. Using old magazines or pages printed from the Internet for inspiration, they should cut out (or draw) an image of something characteristic of their country. To make the activity more challenging, they can add more categories of information or additional pages for each country. They may also add countries besides the seven represented by the dolls in the case.
  - 5** Have students make a cover for their World Travel Guidebooks and bind it together with their worksheet pages using a stapler or a hole punch and yarn. Alternatively, if students have chosen to work on different countries, you may collect their pages and put them into a binder representing the whole class’s work.

### Discussion Questions:

- When you go to another country, how do you know what kind of clothing to take? What special supplies might you need? Would you take a dictionary?
- How do people get around in other countries? What kind of food would you expect to find? What interesting things would there be to do?
- What kinds of toys do children in other countries have? What games would you play if you were playing with children in that country?
- If you were there on a special holiday, what kinds of activities might you see? What would people be wearing and doing?

**See page 21 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.**

# World Travel Guidebook

COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY (What part of the world is the country in? What countries surround it? Are there mountains? Tropical rainforests? Deserts?):

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Draw or paste an image from this country here.



CLIMATE:

---

PEOPLE (What cultural groups does the country include?):

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---

LANGUAGES:

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SPECIAL FOODS:

---

CLOTHING (What do people wear? Are there special kinds of clothes?):

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---

CURRENCY:

---

HOLIDAYS:

---

OTHER INTERESTING FACTS (For example, does the country have special animals? What do people there do for fun?):

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## ACTIVITY 5 Write a Story

**Grades 1–5**

**Related Objects: All**

After listening to a story about one of the dolls in the case, students will have the opportunity to create and tell, write, or even perform their own stories based on what they know about the dolls and where they come from.

### **Materials:**

- “Ahmed and the Donkey” story, next page

### **What To Do:**

- 1** Talk with your students about the doll from Syria and what they know about that country. Explain that they are about to hear a story about a Syrian boy named Ahmed that was made up but incorporates real information about Syria.
- 2** Read the story to the students (or tell it from memory, if you prefer).
- 3** Engage your students in a conversation about what they learned from the story (see Discussion Questions below).
- 4** Have your students pick one of the dolls in the case and write a story or a play about it. Students can base their stories on the research they did for the World Travel Guide. They can give the doll a name and pretend it is a child or an adult. Encourage them to think about the kind of place the doll lives: Is it in the city or the country? Is it modern or “traditional”? What language does the doll speak? Are there special

foods or holidays that students might want to incorporate in the story? What occupations do adults or children have in that country and which one is the doll doing?

- 5** With younger students, it may be necessary instead to have a class discussion about each doll before the story-writing, during which students can ask questions and (with your help) find out more about the doll’s country of origin.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- From the story, what can you tell about the kind of land Ahmed lived in?
- What was the weather like?
- What kind of plants and animals live in Ahmed’s country?
- Why was the donkey so thirsty and what does that tell you about the land?
- What about the wind? What good things did it bring?
- How good do you think Ahmed’s clothing was for the place he lived? Why might he wear a long, loose robe?
- What was Ahmed’s religion? Did other people share it? How do you know?
- From the story, what do you think children in Ahmed’s country do that’s the same or different from what you do?

**See page 21 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.**

# Ahmed and the Donkey

Story by Jewell Handy  
Adapted by Cris Scorza  
Brooklyn Children's Museum

**T**here was a little boy named Ahmed who lived deep in a desert valley. His village in the valley lay between a shimmering silver sea on the east and a vast dry desert on the west. His beautiful valley was well known for the fragrant cedar trees that grew throughout it and even upon the highest crests of the hills that surrounded it.

Ahmed loved to wander through the valley breathing in the scent of the cedars as the great winds that blew from north to south made his long *gambaz* (robe) and *kaffiyeh* (headscarf) whip around his body and face. He would chase the winds from one end of the valley to the other and back again until he tired himself out and collapsed beneath the tiny cedar in front of his house, dreaming about being lifted by the winds to the top of a hill so that he could see the shimmering silver sea and the great desert for himself.

He had heard his mother tell stories of the village where she grew up in the east right on the banks of the shimmering silver sea. He had heard his father tell stories of wandering with his family through the great dry desert as a boy before they finally settled in the cedar valley.

Ahmed was jealous. He never had any adventures in the valley. His parents had

great memories of the sea and the desert and he feared he would never have such stories to tell his own children when he grew up. "All I ever get to do is wake up, go to bed, go to mosque, and water the donkey!" he shouted and stamped his foot.

Ahmed hated to water the family donkey, but because he was the youngest and smallest and it was the easiest chore, it was his job to do it every day. "I'm thirstee! I'm thirstee!" the donkey would bray every morning when Ahmed went out to the stable to get him. "I'm thirstee! I'm thirstee!" It made Ahmed furious!

One morning, Ahmed had an idea. There was a great cedar atop the highest hill in the valley. It was taller than any other cedar he had ever seen. Ahmed thought, "If I can get the donkey to carry me up to the top of the highest hill in the valley, I can climb that cedar tree and see the shimmering sea and the vast desert."

As soon as Ahmed reached the stable, the donkey began to bray, "I'm thirsteeeee! I'm thirsteeeee!" Ahmed looked him right in the eyes, pulled on his lead and said, "Until I've seen the desert, and until I've seen the sea, you won't get any water from me!" The donkey only looked back at him and brayed, "I'm thirsteeeee! I'm thirsteeeee!" For what else could he do? He was only a donkey.

Ahmed began to lead the donkey toward the north end of the valley where the highest hill stood. It was a long walk for a little boy and a donkey and the donkey continued to bray, "I'm thirsteeeee! I'm thirsteeeee!" This made Ahmed very annoyed and he would only answer, "Until I've seen the desert, and until I've seen the Sea, you won't get any water from me!"

Ahmed and  
the Donkey  
(continued)

When Ahmed and his donkey finally reached the great hill, they both looked up and saw that it was quite high and would take a long time for a little boy and his donkey to climb. The donkey began to pull at his lead and he brayed even louder, "I'm thirsteeee! I'm thirsteeee!" Ahmed was beginning to get a little thirsty himself and he wondered how they would ever climb so high, but he only said, "Until I've seen the desert, and until I've seen the sea, you won't get any water from me!"

The donkey allowed Ahmed to lead him up the hill. For what could he do? He was only a donkey. As Ahmed and the donkey climbed the hill they could see the great cedar tree that sat at the summit. They could also smell the fragrant green needles that fanned out on the great branches of the cedar tree. The donkey brayed with every ten steps, "I'm thirsteeee! I'm thirsteeee!" Ahmed always answered, "Until I've seen the desert, and until I've seen the sea, you won't get any water from me!"

When they finally reached the cedar, Ahmed tied the donkey to the tree and began to climb. The donkey brayed up at him, "I'm thirsteeee! I'm thirsteeee!" and Ahmed shouted, "Until I've seen the desert, and until I've seen the sea, you won't get any water from me!"

He quickly climbed five branches, one, two, three, four, five! He looked to the east and he looked to the west. Do you think he saw the desert? No, but he could see the tops

of the flat stone houses of his village. He could look into some of the wide windows that let the winds blow through so that they were cool even in a desert valley. He climbed five more branches, one, two, three, four, five! Do you think he saw the sea? No, but he could see the great golden dome of the mosque where he and his family went to pray and celebrate at special times of the year with the people of the village.

He climbed five more branches, one, two, three, four, five! How many branches had he climbed? That's right, fifteen! He was beginning to become very tired and he noticed that it was getting colder the higher he went. When he looked down at the branches he noticed that there was snow on some of them! Yes, there was snow at that altitude, even in the desert. He was sure he was high enough now to see the desert and the sea. And as he looked to the east and looked to the west, do you think he saw them? Yes!

But only for a second, because all of a sudden he slipped on the wet snow and began to fall! He fell down five branches, one, two, three, four, five! The soft cedar branches caught him as he fell down five more! One, two, three, four, five! And five more! one, two, three, four, five! Finally he landed with a thump, on the ground right in front of the donkey. A big clump of snow landed, thump! right in his lap and began to melt into a puddle in the lap of his robe. The donkey walked over and began to drink, slurp! Slurp! Slurp! And when he had finished, he said, "You must have seen the desert and you must have seen the sea, because that's the tastiest water you've ever given me!"

## ACTIVITY 6

# Organize A World Fiesta

### All Grades

### Related Objects: All

Organizing a celebratory World Fiesta can be culmination of the class's studies of the dolls and world cultures. The activity can be as limited or expansive as you wish. It may be for your class alone, perhaps including parents, or your class can host another class. It can focus on the dolls and their countries or on the cultures represented by the students in the class. It offers the opportunity for students to show off their dolls, research, stories, and any other curricular activities that you have done in conjunction with the case.

### Materials:

- The dolls and books from the case, on display
- The music CD from the case, and any others you or your students supply
- Student-made dolls, World Travel Guidebook(s), and stories, on display
- Student-researched resources such as books or Internet sites, either displayed or in the form of a hand-out "resource list"
- Other resources such as examples of food or crafts from other parts of the world or from students' countries of origin

### What To Do:

**1** Introduce the idea of the World Fiesta in a whole-class discussion and describe the scope you have in mind, inviting ideas from the students as to what they would like to include in the event.

- 2** Divide the class into several small groups and have each group take a country to research and organize. (You may select these countries based on the demographics of your class, the neighborhood in which your school is located, or the countries the dolls in the case come from).
- 3** Explain to students that they are to research a holiday, festival, or other celebration from "their" country. The first step is to identify holidays and to choose one. Then they need to find out things like what the holiday celebrates, and what special ceremonies, food, music, or costumes are associated with the holiday. They can use resources in the case, in the school or local library, or on the Internet.
- 4** Have students choose one aspect of that celebration to share with the class, such as a food that is eaten during that event, a game that is played, a song that is sung, or a dance that is performed. (For example, a group studying Poland could share a polka with the rest of the class.) If students choose to focus on food, ask parents to help their children prepare a special dish and bring it to class.
- 5** On the day of your World Fiesta, have each group give a presentation about its country and share its foods, games, songs, or dances.
- 6** Have a great time!

**See page 21 for details on how this activity meets New York State Learning Standards.**

## List of Terms

The terms of cultural studies and multiculturalism are nuanced and often sensitive. They can be confused and even misused. Definitions are offered here for you and your older students as appropriate.

**culture:**

the shared beliefs, customs, language, values, and characteristic products of a group of people that are passed down from generation to generation.

**costume doll:**

a doll dressed, for purposes of display, to represent the traditional clothing of a country, region, or ethnic group.

**ethnic:**

people who identify with each other, or are identified by others, as part of a group, because of their racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin.

**folk:**

usually used to describe the traditional music, art, or dance of a national, regional, or ethnic group; its origins and practice are generally based in the lives of “ordinary,” anonymous people with no special training.

**generalization:**

a broad statement about a group or phenomenon, drawn from particular instances but not necessarily representing a scientific sample, and subject to revision.

**immigration:**

the process of moving from one country to another, specifically entering and settling in a country that is not your country of origin.

**multiculturalism:**

in a society composed of multiple ethnic, religious, national, racial, or other defined groups, the ideas and practices of mutual respect and tolerance by which people manage to sustain their group identity and simultaneously to co-exist within the larger society.

**replica:**

an exact reproduction of something, using the same materials and scale.

**represent, representation:**

an image or object that stands for something else.

**traditional**

a way of doing things or beliefs and ideas that are customary and are handed down from one generation to another, often unwritten.

## Field Trips

The following museums are among many in New York City that offer school group visits related to world cultures or the multicultural history of New York:

**Asia Society and Museum**

725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), Manhattan  
(212) 327-9211  
[www.internationalead.org/education](http://www.internationalead.org/education)

**Brooklyn Museum**

200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn  
(718) 638-5000  
[www.brooklynmuseum.org](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org)

**El Museo del Barrio**

1230 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan  
(212) 831-7272  
[www.elmuseo.org](http://www.elmuseo.org)

**Lower East Side Tenement Museum**

108 Orchard Street, Manhattan  
(212) 982-8420  
[www.tenement.org](http://www.tenement.org)

**Museum of the City of New York**

1220 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan  
(212) 534-1672  
[www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org)

**National Museum of the American Indian**

George Gustav Heye Center  
One Bowling Green, Manhattan  
(212) 514-3700  
[www.nmai.si.edu](http://www.nmai.si.edu)

## Bibliography and Web Resources

There are many national, religious, and ethnic organizations as well as folklore centers in New York City whose websites provide information and in some cases resources that are useful for teaching about different cultures. Among them are:

**City Lore**, Manhattan

Includes a monthly calendar of festivals in New York City  
[www.citylore.org](http://www.citylore.org)

**Greek Cultural Center, Inc.**, Astoria  
[www.greekculturalcenter.com](http://www.greekculturalcenter.com)

**Hindu Temple & Society of North America**, Flushing  
[www.nyganeshtemple.org](http://www.nyganeshtemple.org)

**Ukrainian Museum**, Manhattan  
[www.ukrainianmuseum.org](http://www.ukrainianmuseum.org)

**Museum of Chinese in the Americas**, Manhattan  
[www.moca-nyc.org](http://www.moca-nyc.org)

**Yeshiva University Museum**, Manhattan  
[www.yu.edu/museum](http://www.yu.edu/museum)

**West Indian American Day Carnival**, Brooklyn  
[www.carnaval.com/cityguides/newyork/ny\\_carn.htm](http://www.carnaval.com/cityguides/newyork/ny_carn.htm)

Other resources related to dolls, world cultures, and multiculturalism:

**Hamilton Leslie. Child's Play Around the World**. Perigee Books, 1996.

**Hollyer, Beatrice. Wake Up World!: A Day in the Life of Children Around the World**. Henry Holt & Col., 1999.

**Khan, Jemima. A Life Like Mine: How Children Live Around the World**. Penguin Books, 2003.

**Kindersley, Anabel. Children Just Like Me**. DK Children, 1995.

**Montanari, Donata. Children Around the World**. Kids Can Press, 2001.

**United Nations Cyberschoolbus**

United Nations website for teachers and young people, including statistics about member countries.  
[www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/index.asp](http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/index.asp)

**Multicultural Education Through Miniatures**

Features images of dolls and puppets and related stories from many countries and several centuries.  
[www.coedu.usf.edu/Culture/](http://www.coedu.usf.edu/Culture/)

**National Costume Doll Collection**

[www.home.deds.nl/~dolls/](http://www.home.deds.nl/~dolls/)

You can also do an Internet search for "costume dolls" and find up-to-date websites showing dolls from many cultures.



■ RESOURCES AND REFERENCE MATERIALS ■

## Correlations with New York State Learning Standards

The activities included in this guide meet the following New York State Learning Standard Performance Indicators for elementary students (K–5):

New York State Learning Standard Performance Indicators (Elementary Level)					Activity					
Standard Area	Standard #	Subject	Letter	Students will	1	2	3	4	5	6
Arts	1	Theater	b	Imitate experiences through pantomime, play making, dramatic play, story dramatization, story telling, and role playing					•	
Arts	1	Visual Arts	a	Experiment and create art works, in a variety of mediums (drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, video, and computer graphics), based on a range of individual and collective experiences	•		•			
Arts	3	Visual Arts	a	Explain their reflections about the meanings, purposes, and sources of works of art; describe their responses to the works and the reasons for those responses		•				
Arts	3	Visual Arts	b	Explain the visual and other sensory qualities (surfaces, colors, textures, shape, sizes, volumes) found in a wide variety of art works		•				
ELA	4	Visual Arts	a	Look at and discuss a variety of art works and artifacts from world cultures to discover some important ideas, issues, and events of those cultures		•	•			
Arts	4	Visual Arts	c	Create art works that show the influence of a particular culture	•		•			
English Language Arts	1	Listening & Reading		Gather and interpret information from children's reference books, magazines, textbooks, electronic bulletin boards, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, and from such forms as charts, graphs, maps, and diagrams		•	•	•	•	•
ELA	1	Listening & Reading		Select information appropriate to the purpose of their investigation and relate ideas from one text to another				•	•	•
ELA	1	Listening & Reading		Select and use strategies they have been taught for notetaking, organizing, and categorizing information		•		•	•	
ELA	1	Listening & Reading		Ask specific questions to clarify and extend meaning	•	•	•	•	•	•
ELA		Speaking & Writing		Present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms such as summaries, paraphrases, brief reports, stories, posters, and charts		•		•	•	•
ELA	1	Speaking & Writing		Select a focus, organization, and point of view for oral and written presentations		•		•	•	•
ELA	1	Speaking & Writing		Use details, examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences to explain or clarify information		•		•	•	•
ELA	1	Speaking & Writing		Observe basic writing conventions, such as correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as sentence and paragraph structures appropriate to written forms		•		•	•	
ELA	2	Speaking & Writing		Create their own stories, poems, and songs using the elements of the literature they have read and appropriate vocabulary					•	

## RESOURCES AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

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New York State Learning Standard Performance Indicators (Elementary Level)					Activity					
Standard Area	Standard #	Subject	Letter	Students will	1	2	3	4	5	6
ELA	2	Speaking & Writing		Observe the conventions of grammar and usage, spelling, and punctuation		•		•	•	
ELA	4	Speaking & Writing		Listen attentively and recognize when it is appropriate for them to speak		•		•	•	•
Social Studies	4	Speaking & Writing		Take turns speaking and respond to other's ideas in conversations on familiar topics		•		•	•	•
Social Studies	2			Study about different world cultures and civilizations focusing on their accomplishments, contributions, values, beliefs, and traditions		•	•	•	•	•
Social Studies	2			Explore the lifestyles, beliefs, traditions, rules and laws, and social/cultural needs and wants of people during different periods in history and in different parts of the world		•	•	•	•	•
Social Studies	3			Study about how people live, work, and utilize natural resources		•	•	•	•	•
Social Studies	3			Identify and compare the physical, human, and cultural characteristics of different regions and people		•	•	•	•	•
Social Studies	3			Ask geographic questions about where places are located; why they are located where they are; what is important about their locations; and how their locations are related to the location of other people and places				•		
Social Studies	3			Gather and organize geographic information from a variety of sources and display in a number of ways				•		
Social Studies	3			Analyze geographic information by making relationships, interpreting trends and relationships, and analyzing geographic data				•		

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