

CORN HUSK DOLLS



Materials

- Cornhusks
- Rubber bands
- Yarn
- Feathers, beads, etc. for decoration

DIRECTIONS

History:

Cornhusk dolls have been made by Northeastern Native Americans probably since the beginning of corn agriculture more than a thousand years ago.

Brittle, dried cornhusks become soft if soaked in water and produce finished dolls that are sturdy enough for children's toys. Both male and female dolls are made

using the corn silk tassel for hair. Feet and body are stuffed with leaves and tied, while arms and legs are made from braided or rolled husks.

Dolls measure anywhere between four and ten inches tall.

Sometimes a face is drawn, or red dots are painted for cheeks; but more often than not the doll's face is left blank. The dolls are

often dressed in cornhusks, animal hide or cloth, but some were made without clothing.

Personal accessories were made for many dolls, helping prepare children for everyday life. Female dolls were given cradleboards, hoes, and sewing kits, while male dolls were provided with bows and arrows, canoe paddles and warrior's gear.

See back for instructions and assembly diagram.

Directions:

1. Sort corn husks into four categories:

Category 1: Outside husks with lots of black mildew and or rotted veins. Throw these away.

Category 2: Outside husks that are not molded too badly but are stiff. Set these aside and split up into strips about a half-inch to 1" wide. These will be your arms.

Category 3: Large pieces that are not too stained up. They should be at least 2.5" wide, but 3" or more is better. These will be the outside of the body. When you do Step 2, start with one of these nice big pieces on the bottom and put other husks on top. Then when you tri-fold and double, the big husk will hold everything inside.

Category 4: Everything else. It makes no difference how thin or crummy you think the other pieces are. These smaller pieces can be piled up on a Category Three husk and folded in where they will not be seen. They provide fill and stiffness.

2. Place 3-4 large pieces of corn husks on top of each other (Figure 1). Fold them in thirds lengthwise, making a long narrow piece (Figure 2).
3. Fold the long narrow piece in half. This piece will be the body of the doll (Figure 3).
4. Give each student two rubber bands. Ask them to place one rubber band on the folded husk slightly below the top fold. This will create the head of the doll.
5. Give each student a smaller piece of corn husk to make the arms of the doll.
6. Have students place the second rubber band under the crossways arm piece.
7. For a doll wearing pants, use scissors to split the section below the waist in two. For a doll wearing a skirt, tuck extra pieces of corn husk under the waist band to form a full skirt.
8. Decorate the doll by gluing on yarn for hair, seeds or ink for facial features and beads or feathers for clothing.
9. Add a magnet to the back of the doll so it can be placed on the students' refrigerator door.

Credit: Jon Eller, Agricultural Literacy Coordinator, U of I Extension, Pike County, IL

Figure 1

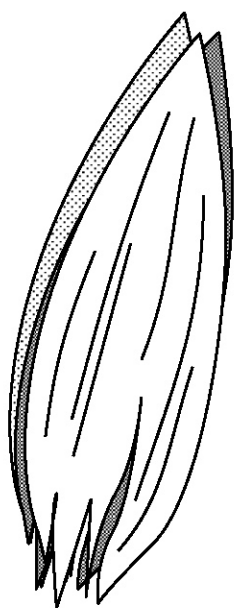


Figure 2

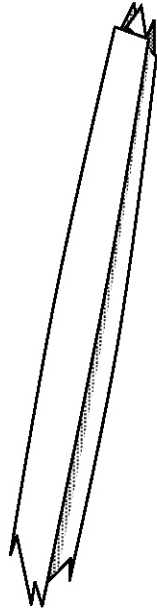


Figure 3

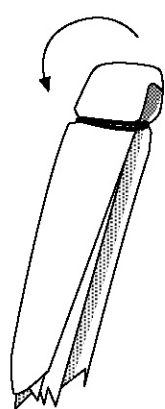
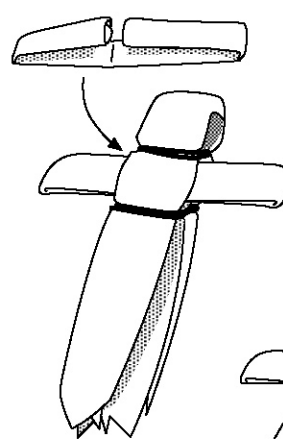
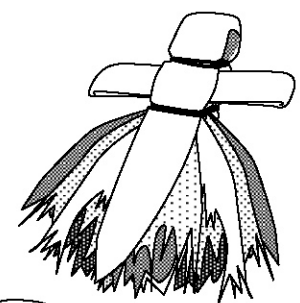


Figure 4



Female doll, completed



Male doll, completed

