Russian History through Matryoshka Dolls

Kathleen Pate, Education Specialist
Clinton Presidential Library and Museum
Why Matryoshka Dolls?

- I started collecting nesting dolls in 1992, the year President Clinton was elected to his first term.
- The aesthetic evolution of Matryoshka dolls reflects Russian history from the late Imperial Period to today.
- My presentation last year was on the relationship between President Clinton and President Yeltsin.
The First Nesting Doll

Nesting boxes (China 1000) and nesting dolls (Japan - Fukuruma and Kokeshi 1600) existed before Russian Matryoshka.
Folk Art 1890s - 1920s

Abramtsevo estate, small village north of Moscow, an artist colony known in the 19th century for fostering the revival of Russian folk art and traditional crafts.
Abramtsevo artists—particularly Sergey Malyutin and Vasily Petrovich Zvyozdochkin—crafted the first matryoshka doll in 1890. Malyutin sketched the doll's outline and contracted with a woodturner to carve the doll's wooden husk. With a lathe and chisel, Zvyozdochkin created the first blank matryoshka dolls from soft linden wood. Afterward, Malyutin hand-painted the unfinished Russian nesting dolls.
Folk Art 1890s - 1920s
Folk Art 1890s - 1920s
Folk Art 1890s - 1920s
Factories 1920s - 1990s
Factories 1920s - 1990s
Factories 1920s - 1990s
Regional Dolls
Matching Matryoshkas

- Divide into fourteen teams (3-4 to a team)
- Each team will receive a card with either an image of a Matryoshka or a description of a regional style
- Teams need to find the matching doll or description for their card, without showing their card to anyone on another team.
- Present your match to the judge (Kathleen) to determine if you are correct.
- The first pair of teams to successfully match wins.
Zagorsk/Sergiev Posad

- Muted colors
- Painted with gouache including flesh tones of face and hands
- Light brown hair on largest doll, sometimes black hair on smaller dolls
- Simple babushka in red, green, blue, orange, and yellow
- Tiny red heart shaped mouth
- Apron may plain or decorated with simple dots
- Largest doll may have one arm up and other at her side
Semenov (Semyonov)

- Bright & vibrant - typically red with a yellow babushka
- Natural wood for skin tone
- Black hair
- Two small black dots indicate nose
- Pink mouth and cheeks
- Bouquet of flowers on apron, usually red
Polkov Maiden

- Bright & vibrant
- Rendered with aniline dyes and black india ink
- Natural wood for skin tone
- Black curly hair
- Two small black dots indicate nose
- Pink mouth and cheeks
- Bouquet of flowers on apron, usually pink, blue, and yellow
- Often dolls have no arms
Kirov, Vyatka (Viatka), Nolinsk

- Bright & vibrant - typically yellow, red, or purple
- Natural wood for skin tone
- Red (orange) hair
- Two small black dots indicate nose
- Pink mouth and cheeks, with thin black line separating the lips
- Bouquet of flowers on apron
- Smaller dolls sometimes have polka dots on body or babushka
Bright & vibrant - typically yellow, red, or purple
Natural wood for skin tone
Red (orange) hair
Two small black dots indicate nose
Pink mouth and cheeks, with thin black line separating the lips
Decorated with fine cut pieces of straw
Kalinin

- Natural wood for skin tone for face and hands
- Blonde hair, blue eyes
- Decorated with poker work - brown, wood burned grooves
Yoshkar Ola (Yoscar Ola)

- Yellow, green, or blue babushkas
- Natural wood for skin tone for face and hands
- Black hair, black eyes
- Geometric designs on apron, often in red
Soviet Union/Communist Bloc

Belarus
(Brest Region)
○ Traditional
○ Black Lacquered
○ Pastel
Soviet Union/Communist Bloc

Above Ukraine, Right Poland
Fine Art 1990s Today

NATIONAL ARCHIVES and RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
President Clinton

This set of nesting dolls of world leaders includes, in decreasing size, Clinton, George H. W. Bush, Yeltsin, Gorbachev, Kohl, Major, Thatcher, Mitterand, and Hussein.
Clinton Presidential Library

- Little Rock, Arkansas
- 80+ million pages written materials
- 100,000+ museum objects/artifacts
- 2.6 million photographs
- 18,300 audio and video recordings

Left: Exhibits on second and third floor of the Clinton Presidential Library.
Clintontibrary.gov/education

★ Online Educational Programs
Pre-K - 2nd grade: clintontibrary.gov/education/teachers/pre-k-second-grades
3rd - 5th grade: www.clintontibrary.gov/education/teachers/third-fifth-grades
6th - 8th grade: www.clintontibrary.gov/education/teachers/sixth-eighth-grades
9th - 12th grade: www.clintontibrary.gov/education/teachers/ninth-twelfth-grades
★ Civics for All of US: www.clintontibrary.gov/education/
★ The Powers of the Presidency: www.clintontibrary.gov/education/powers-presidency
★ Lesson Plans and Activities: www.clintontibrary.gov/education/teachers/lesson-plans-and-activities
★ Teacher Workshops: www.clintontibrary.gov/education/teacher-workshops
Daily Schedules
- President - clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/collections/show/39
- First Lady - clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/collections/show/33

Topical Research Guides - clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/topics-guides

Digital Library Exhibits - clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/exhibits

Presidential Travel Schedule - clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/travel-schedule

Meetings and Calls with Foreign Leaders - clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/foreign-leaders-meetings-calls

Memcons and Telcons - clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/memcons-telcons
Clinton Digital Library

- 2 million pages of archival documents
- 400 audio recordings, photographs and streaming videos
- 8 Digital Library Exhibits, 7 Topical Research Guides
- Clinton Library YouTube
- Clinton Library Facebook, Instagram, & Twitter

Learn more...

President Clinton’s Daily Schedule

The daily schedules of President Clinton document meetings, trips, speaking engagements and social activities for the eight years of the Clinton...
Questions? Contact Us

clinton.education@nara.gov

www.clintonlibrary.gov

clinton.presidentiallibraries.us

Follow Us on Social Media - #TeacherTuesday

Facebook

@WJCLibrary

Twitter
The End