

Name: _____

Date: _____

Matryoshka, The Nesting Doll

What is a Matryoshka Doll?

The matryoshka doll is a well-known Russian toy. It is carved of wood and cut into two pieces. The top piece pictures the head and the bottom piece pictures the body. A matryoshka doll is hollow so that when you open it up you will find another smaller doll. That is why a matryoshka doll is also called a nesting doll. Each doll nests inside another larger doll. A matryoshka doll is usually made in sets of 3, 5, 7, 10, or even more!

Why is the Doll Called A Matryoshka?

The name comes from Matryona. This was a popular name for girls in "old Russia." Matryona comes from the Latin word, mater, which means mother. These dolls were passed from generation to generation. Each new generation would make a larger doll so that the others could fit inside. The matryoshka doll symbolizes motherhood and lots of babies.

How Did Matryoshka Dolls Come To Be?

Sergei Malyutin was the first Russian artist to design a Matryoshka doll in the 1890s. He got the idea from the Chinese who began making nesting dolls in the early 1800's.

Matryoshka Dolls Today

If you visit Russia today, you will see many elaborate matryoshka dolls in the marketplaces. The most popular dolls have scenes of old Russian folktales painted on them. You know you have a valuable matryoshka doll if each doll in the set is painted with a different scene. Sometimes Russian artists have fun with matryoshka dolls. You can buy them with faces of world leaders or popular movie characters. You never know what surprises you will find on a modern day matryoshka doll!

You Are An Expert

Answer these questions to qualify as a matryoshka expert.

1. In what country can you buy a matryoshka doll?
2. What is another name for a matryoshka doll?
3. What does a matryoshka doll symbolize?
4. Who was the first Russian artist to make a matryoshka doll?
5. Who were the first people to make nesting dolls?

6. What does the Latin word mater mean?
7. What is a popular name for girls in "old Russia"?
8. If you could design matryoshka dolls, draw what your set would look like. Use the outlines on the next few pages to help you.

