

## Background

American Girls were created by former educator and textbook writer Pleasant Rowland. The collection debuted with three dolls in 1985. Rowland's stated goal was to "bring history to life."

As the company grew, so did the number of dolls. In 1993, Addy Walker was introduced. She was the first doll of color, an enslaved girl seeking freedom in the midst of the Civil War. Later, in 1997, Josefina was welcomed, a Hispanic girl living in colonial New Mexico in 1824. Both Addy and Josefina were designed with input from experts on the time and period. The company hired historians and researchers to ensure the product's historical and cultural accuracy. The textiles and clothes that accompanied the dolls paint a story of what it was like to live during a specific time period. While the dolls' stories are fictional, the dolls and their related items adhered strictly to the time periods represented.

## Task

Students will consider why American Girl dolls were created. By analyzing the Addy and Josefina doll, they will learn how attire and products related to the dolls help create a story about the time period. Students will create a moodboard that represents themselves and discuss the importance of seeing themselves in the world.

## Vocabulary

**Portrait:** a painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders.

**Moodboards:** a type of visual representation that consists of a collage of images, samples, textures, colors, and texts that aims to convey a general idea or feeling about a certain topic.

## Materials

Cardstock for base  
Construction Paper

Glue  
Scissors  
Magazines or printed images  
Markers or Colored Pencils

## Steps

Begin by analyzing both Josefina and Addy dolls.

- What do you notice?
- How can you describe the character just from their clothes?
- What accessories would help to tell a more detailed story of their life?

**\*\***For a further investigation into their complete collection you can have students explore the Josephina Collection [here](#) and the Addy Collection [here](#).

Explain to students why the American Girl dolls were created and the importance of bringing women's history to life and how the stories of the dolls can be seen through the clothes and their accessories.

Have students create their own doll on the American Girl [website](#). Lead an inquiry on their designs.

- What did they like about the design options? What would they change?  
Was anything missing?

Inform students that they will be creating a moodboard that will fill in the missing pieces.

Define what a moodboard is as a class

A moodboard is a collection of visual materials that evoke a certain style or concept. Creative professionals will create moodboards to communicate a feeling associated with an idea.

Students will be creating a moodboard to illustrate who they are and what they would want their own American Girl doll to look like. They will not be creating the physical doll but collaging together visual materials to set the mood for what their doll would look like.

Have students begin by brainstorming.

Challenge the class to begin with the colors or words that would best describe them to help set the theme.

Once they have a clear vision of the theme, they are ready to begin collecting visuals to build their mood board.

Allows students to collage from old magazines, draw their own personal elements or print out images that would help support their story.

Remind students as they are collecting their visuals they should also be curating how they will appear glued down on their base. They are also encouraged to use the colors and words they brainstormed to begin in their final piece.

Once all the visuals, colors and words have been selected and curated, invite students to arrange elements to be glued down onto their base.

Conclude the lesson with a written reflection using the following prompts:

- How would you describe your moodboard?
- What do you hope your moodboard will express to others?
- How would you envision this moodboard being used to create an American Girl Doll?

\*<https://stingrayextraordinaire.tumblr.com/tagged/american%20girl%20moodboards>\*