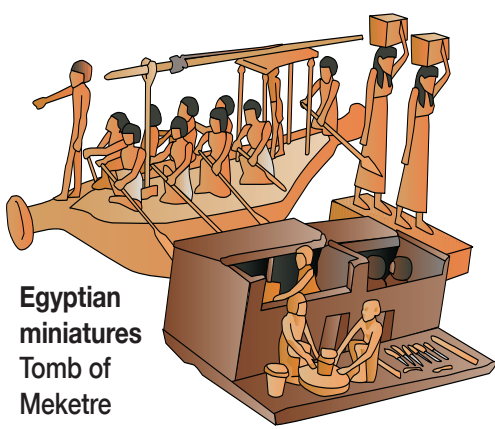
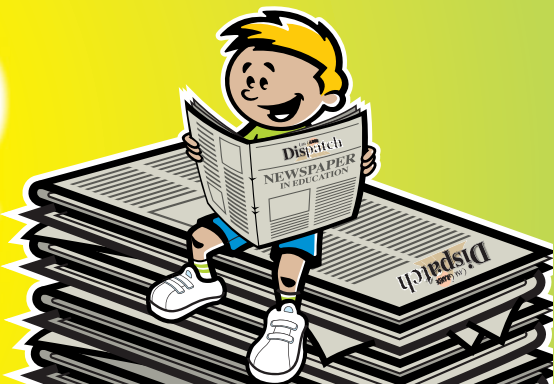


KEEPING STUDENTS WELL INFORMED AT HOME DURING SUMMER VACATION



Egyptian
miniatures
Tomb of
Meketre

WAY BACK WHEN

The earliest known examples of miniatures are small models of boats, pets, furniture and servants found in the tombs of the ancient Egyptians. These tiny recreations were not toys but items full of spiritual meaning.

The Japanese have been making miniature dolls for at least a thousand years. During the annual Hinamatsuri (Doll's Festival), held on March 3, Japanese households with girls display dolls representing the emperor, empress and attendants in traditional court dress. Miniature kitchen items and edible miniature food are also on display.

The dollhouse as we know it can trace its roots to 16th-century Europe. Wealthy aristocrats used "cabinet houses" to display small treasures and collections.

The first dollhouse built for a child is thought to have been commissioned by the Duke of Bavaria in 1558. This "baby house" was a replica of the Duke's home, with four floors, 17 doors and 63 windows. It is doubtful that the Duke's daughter was allowed to play with it.

The idea of elaborate miniature houses caught on and became a measure of social standing with European nobles.

Mass-production techniques of the Industrial Revolution and World War II made dollhouses affordable enough to be toys for children.

Today, most miniature houses in North America have an open back with an architectural facade in front. European dollhouses usually have a hinged front that opens to reveal the interior. Traditionally, dollhouses were an excellent reflection of how people lived. But many contemporary dollhouses tend to reflect the past rather than the present.

KITS

You can design and build a dollhouse from scratch or build from a kit or existing pattern. To keep things simple, you might decide to create a single room in a box, carrying case or window.

Modern dollhouse kits typically consist of precut plywood with tabs and slots to be glued. For best results, inexpensive kits require a lot of hand sanding and the purchase of additional architectural items (shingles, fancy door and window frames).

Before final assembly, the house should be painted. Electricity can be added easily using a copper tape (kits are available) — this should be done before adding wallpaper and flooring.

Furniture kits are also available, and many crafters enjoy making their own furniture and accessories.

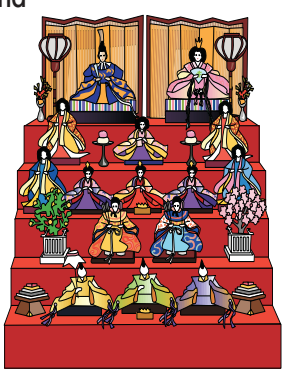
Adding extra details and accessories (books, flowers, knickknacks) makes a dollhouse more realistic and gives it a unique and special feel.

World of Wonder

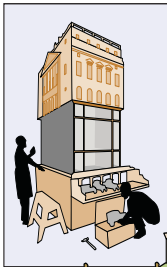
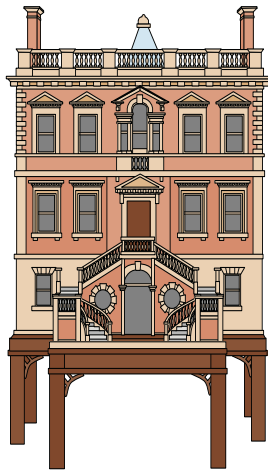
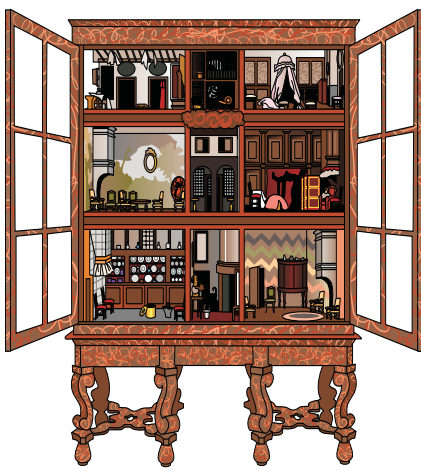
EXPLORING THE REALMS OF HISTORY, SCIENCE, NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY

MINIATURE DOLLHOUSES

There is something fascinating and wonderful about peeking into the window of a mini-house and discovering a tiny world executed in amazing detail. For centuries, children and collectors of all ages have been captivated by the joys and challenges of recreating the world in miniature.



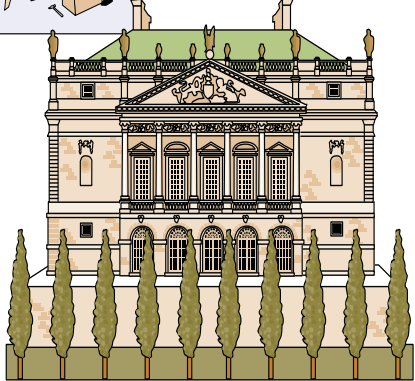
Japanese
Hinamatsuri display



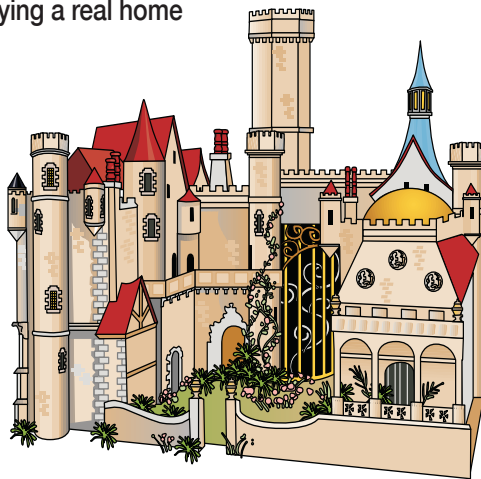
A sense of scale

The **Petronella Oortman House** (c. 1686-1705) is on display at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Holland. Its original price was comparable to buying a real home of the time.

The **Tate Baby House** (1760) is on exhibit at the Museum of Childhood in London, England.



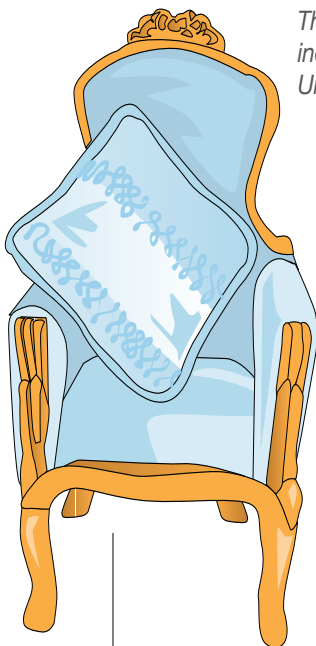
Queen Mary's Dollhouse (1924) is on display at Windsor Castle. The house features two working elevators, electric lights, plumbing with flushable toilets and a wine cellar with bottles filled with real wine.



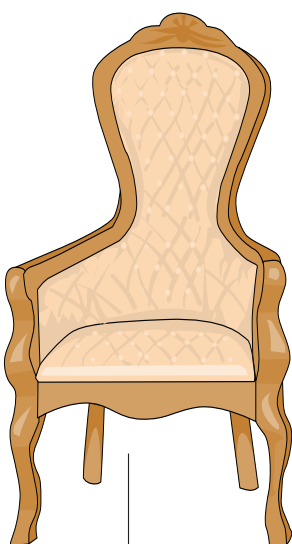
More than eight feet tall, **Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle** (1935) features a gold chandelier encrusted with emeralds and pearls. The castle is on display at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, Ill.

SIZE IS EVERYTHING

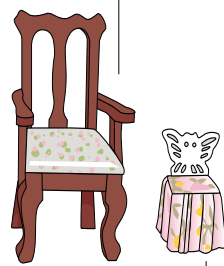
Dollhouses can be found in many sizes (scales). When building, decorating and furnishing a miniature house, it is important to know what scale you are working with. Mixing scales is a big no-no in the world of miniatures.



Collectors often work with 1:12 scale (one foot is equal to one inch).



Contemporary children's play dollhouses are usually built in 1:18 scale (one foot is equal to 2/3 inch).



Smaller still is the 1:48 scale (one foot is equal to 1/4 inch).

The Barbie doll and her playthings are built in 1:6 scale (one inch to every six inches) — this is also known as play scale. Unlike miniatures, toy houses rarely use an exact scale.

If space is an issue, 1:24 scale (one foot is equal to 1/2 inch) is an option. It can be challenging to work with and find 1/2-inch-scale miniatures.



The **Thorne Miniature Rooms** (1932-1940) are a series of 99 miniature rooms, each with a different theme, designed by Narcissa Niblack Thorne. Sixty-eight rooms are on display at the Art Institute of Chicago; others are found at various museums across the United States.

DID YOU KNOW?

There were only two sets of miniature Royal Doulton china ever made: one for Queen Mary's dollhouse, the other for Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle.

Dollhouses are often so prized that they are passed down from generation to generation.

Victorian dollhouses were used to teach young ladies the skills of household management.

The **Dollhouse Museum** in Basel, Switzerland, displays more than 6,000 exhibits (teddy bears, dolls, play shops, dollhouses and miniatures). It is the largest museum of its kind in Europe.

The oldest Colonial-style dollhouse in North America can be seen at the Van Cortlandt Museum in the Bronx, New York. Built in 1744, it is the only dollhouse in America older than the United States itself.

OTHER MINIATURES

The world of miniatures is not restricted to dollhouse enthusiasts. Miniature models have evolved to encompass many interests.

A diorama is a mini-world — a room or entire landscape in a box, carrying case or window.

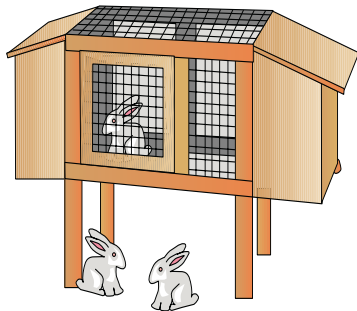
Miniature trains (complete with railroad stations and villages) are another popular form of miniature collecting.

Historic events and fantasy games that include tabletop figures and terrain are also included in the world of the miniature hobbyist.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

The world of miniatures can be a serious business. Handmade, finely crafted miniatures are works of art that can be expensive. For example, a tiny crystal chandelier can cost thousands of dollars, as much as a real (life-size) chandelier.

Miniature trade shows, miniature shops, magazines, books and websites worldwide are also great places to pursue this hobby.



Miniature rabbit hutch for a tiny garden or farm.

SOURCES: *The Ultimate Dolls' House Book*, DK Publishing; *The Dollhouse Book*, Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers; Museum of Science and Industry; *The Book of Miniatures*, Chilton Book Co.; Museum of Childhood (England); www.americanminiaturist.com

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