

Make  
your own

# Loo Roll Doll

...a creative activity pack from

KICK  
THE  
DUST  
Norfolk



This activity pack shows you how to make a simple doll out of things you might have at home. You could follow our suggestions, or invent your own version! A princess... a witch... a spaceman... go wild!

The loo roll dolls in the picture are based on three dolls on display at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse museum. Those dolls were made by poor people who lived in Thursford Workhouse over 150 years ago.

Living in the workhouse in the 1800s was a bit like lockdown. Inmates were not allowed to go out of the workhouse, so the dolls were created from scraps and leftover materials that could easily be found inside-

just like our loo roll dolls in 2020.





# Loo roll dolls: What will I need?



## YOU WILL NEED

- Something for the basic shape- loo roll or kitchen roll tubes, or small boxes
- Something to add colour- pens, pencils or crayons
- Something to fix things together with: glue, tape, elastic bands or staples
- Something for the clothes: old wrapping paper, bags, packaging, foil, or even fabric scraps if you have them - and a pair of scissors.



## Background information

Most workhouse inmates in Victorian times were elderly people, ill people, or children. The three workhouse dolls we have show each of those groups; and old lady, a nurse, and a girl.

The dolls also tell us a lot about the clothing of the time. The old lady doll (pictured) is wearing the brown uniform of Thursford workhouse, a large apron, a shawl around her shoulders and a bonnet on her head.



# Instructions



1) Draw a face and hair on to the front of the loo roll tube.

Poor women 150 years ago generally wore their hair in a bun with a centre parting.

You only need to draw the front because the rest won't show.

**OPTIONAL EXTRA** Stick scraps of wool on for hair instead, if you have them.



**HINT** The easiest way to make the doll is to use an empty loo roll tube- or you could cut a kitchen roll tube down to size. If you don't have either of these, you could make a tube from a piece of card packaging like a cereal box (plain side out).

2) Carefully cut or tear a strip of paper, packaging or fabric to fit around the tube. It will need to reach from below the face, to the bottom of the tube.

3) Roll the dress around the tube and fix in place with tape, glue, staples or an elastic band (a spare hair bobble would work too).



**HINT** An elastic band is useful (but not essential) because you can tuck other things into it later on.

## Background information

Victorian women usually wore a shawl instead of a coat or jumper. A shawl was a large triangle of fabric

worn wrapped around the shoulders.



Beautiful thick woven shawls made in Norwich (pictured) were popular with wealthy women in the 1800s.

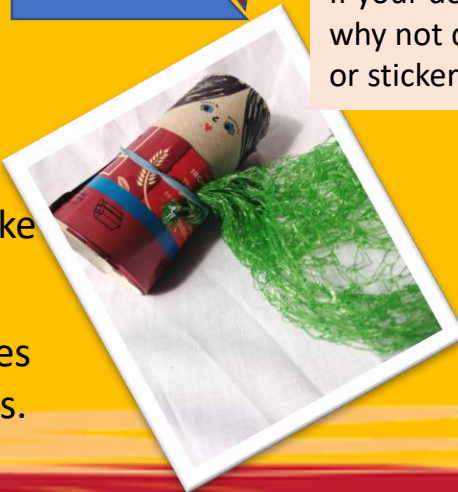
Female workhouse inmates and other poorer women wore woollen knitted shawls to keep themselves warm.



4) Cut a triangle from a different piece of paper and stick it to the back of the doll to make a shawl.

A 'right-angled triangle' works best- this is just a square, folded in half diagonally (a lot of shawls were made like this too).

The longest edge goes around the shoulders.



### OPTIONAL EXTRA

For our doll's shawl we wrapped a fruit netting bag around the doll and tucked it into the elastic band- but any soft, flexible material would work just as well.

If your doll has a paper shawl, why not decorate it with pens or stickers?



5) A loo roll doll's hollow head needs a hat. To make a Victorian-style bonnet, use a soft, flexible paper or fabric if you can. One square of loo roll is ideal.

The piece should be big enough to reach over the top of her head from one ear to the other, and down the back of her head, like the one in the first photo.

Stick down the sides first, then fold in the back.



**OPTIONAL EXTRA**

There are ideas for all sorts of characters and their different hats later on in this pack.



(Image above: detail from *Eventide at the Westminster Union Workhouse*, Von Herkomer)

6) Finally, add a rectangle of paper to give the doll a long apron and she is fully dressed!

More loo roll character ideas on the next page...



## Background information

Until the mid 1900s, women usually wore a practical or decorative head covering, such as a bonnet.

The type of hat you wore told other people your social status: what your job was, how rich or poor you were, and what your personality might be.

In the workhouse in the 1800s, when our dolls were made, all women wore the same plain bonnets made from cheap fabric as part of their uniform.

They also wore a long apron to keep their clothes clean while working. Until the late 1800s, all washing was done by hand at the workhouse, and it was very hard work.





# Loo roll dolls - extra ideas

You can use whatever you've got to make a little loo roll character!

We wanted to make all three workhouse dolls, so we used a stripy paper bag for our 'child' doll's dress, decorated her bonnet with felt pens, and gave her some arms made from a biscuit wrapper.



But with a bit of imagination you could turn a loo roll into any character you like! Here are some ideas...





# Show us what you were inspired to make!

We really hope you enjoyed the activity in this pack. If you'd like to share what you've made with us, contact [gressenhall.museum@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:gressenhall.museum@norfolk.gov.uk) with a photo of your creation.



You may have been surprised to find out that poor people in the workhouse were allowed to make dolls! If you would like to find out more true stories about workhouse life, check out [www.workhousenetwork.org](http://www.workhousenetwork.org)



This activity pack was created by  which is a project to inspire young people to get involved in changing our museums for the better.

If you are aged between 16 and 25 and would like to find out more about all the exciting opportunities offered by *Kick The Dust*, please contact our project worker [rachel.duffield@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.duffield@norfolk.gov.uk)

