Games of the Past

**Maize Dollies**

**Materials:**

Green Maize leaves (8 per student)

String 1 yard long

Cotton balls

**Classroom Time:** 1 class period

**Teacher’s introduction to the activity:** Read the Iroquois story of the corn doll.

The following is one story as to why corn husk dolls have no faces:  
"For a long, long time the Iroquois have referred to the corn, beans, and squash as the three sisters or the sustainers of life. Of the three sisters, the Spirit of the Corn, was so pleased at having been given this distinction that she asked the Creator to think of something special that she could do to be of further assistance to the people that had so honored her. The Creator suggested that she make a doll from her husk and so she did. She fashioned a lovely cornhusk doll with a strikingly beautiful face. She instructed the doll to entertain all the little children of the villages. The lovely corn husk doll did as she was instructed. She traveled from village to village telling wonderful stories and playing happy games with the children.  
  
All of the people grew to love the corn husk doll, and they expressed their joy in smiles and laughter. The people frequently complemented her on her great beauty. All was well at first, but as time went on and more and more people told the corn husk doll how lovely she looked, something began to change. The corn husk doll began to spend less and less time with the children and more and more time gazing at her handsome reflection in the waters of the many lakes, rivers and streams. She began to think only of herself.

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| Eventually, the Creator called her to his lodge. On the way there, she stopped by a pool of water to admire her reflection and in doing so kept the Creator waiting for her arrival. When she finally did enter the Creator's lodge, he reminded her of her responsibility to the children and cautioned her against spending her time in self-admiration. He warned her that if she did not change her ways, he would have to do something about it. The doll assured the Creator that she would remember His words and she returned to the children of the villages. Before long, however, the people reminded her of her great beauty. She began to spend less time with the children because she became too busy admiring herself.  The Creator summoned her again and just as before, the doll succumbed to the temptation of stopping to gaze at her reflection. When she finally arrived at the lodge of the Creator, He told her of his disappointment in her behavior. He reminded her of how she had neglected the children because she had become too preoccupied with thoughts of herself and her appearance. He reminded her that she had been created with a purpose and that purpose was to bring happiness to the little children. He told her that He would have to control her vanity since she couldn't do it herself. Then, the Creator instructed the corn husk doll to leave His lodge and look at her reflection in a nearby pond in order to better understand His decision. She left the lodge, and walked to the pond, and looked into the waters. Now she understood. She no longer had a face. The Creator had taken it away." |  |  |

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|  | From that time on, the Iroquois do not put faces on their corn husk dolls as a reminder that vanity can be an obstacle that prevents us from accomplishing our appointed tasks. The people are also cautioned against placing to much emphasis on superficialities. |

[**http://museum.oneidanation.org/education/cornHusk.htm**](http://museum.oneidanation.org/education/cornHusk.htm)

**Instruction:**

1. Put a cotton ball into one maize leaf, and tie around the ball.

2. Use a long leaf for arms, and roll it, then tie the ends, leaving the enough length for the

“hands”.

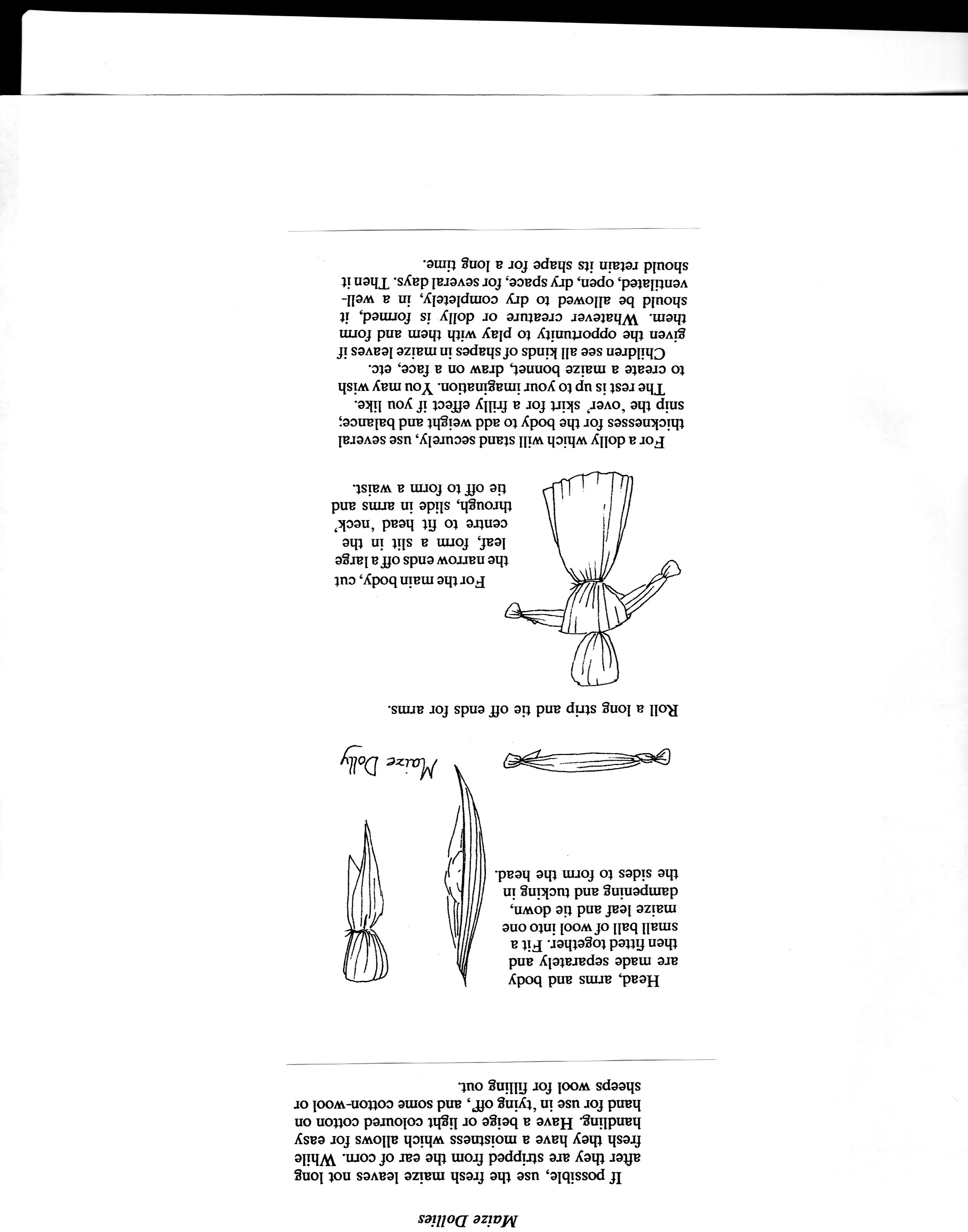
3. Find some large leaves, and for the body, cut the narrow ends off, fold the leaf, cut a slit

in the middle.

4. Put the “head” through the slit, & the “arms” through the fold part of the large leaf.

5. Tie the middle of the leaf to form a “waist”.

6. Decorate your creation using things around you, a scrap of material for an “apron”, etc.

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