

Pattern for a Poppet

BY CHRISTINE LEFEVER

Poppet is an old term of endearment for a child or a doll and is immortalized in the nursery rhyme, “A Moppet, A Poppet, A Dainty Darlyng.” This particular project reflects several aspects of eighteenth-century dolls.

Most early dolls bore the image of a child or adult rather than an infant. “The cuddly toy and baby doll to be nursed and cosseted are conspicuous by their absence,” wrote doll historian John Darcy Noble.

Dolls were also the playthings of adults as well as children. “If the children of that time were more adult than those of the same age today, their parents were paradoxically more childlike than most adults are today,” Noble wrote. “Even the educated and cultured were amused by what we should now consider infantile diversions—crude practical jokes, simple toys like jumping jacks, and paper dolls. This is something I try to remember when confronting what I assume to be a child’s toy from this period, for it might well have belonged to a married man or woman.”

Dolls that survive from the eighteenth century were usually made of wood. This Poppet is inspired by them but uses cloth and paint for ease of creation. Dolls with children’s faces were often dressed in shifts or petticoats of flannel or linen, sometimes layered. Although eighteenth-century gowns for babies and ladies were usually pinned together in front, the gown worn by this Poppet is fastened in the back with three sets of ties, based on a doll costume in London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.

The finished doll is approximately 21 inches long.



MATERIALS

1/2 yard plain muslin for body
1/2 yard fabric for clothing
Fiberfill stuffing
Off-white thread for hemming
Off-white buttonhole or carpet thread for sewing body parts together
2 yards linen ribbon for ties on bonnet and gown
Wool roving for hair
1 yard lace, optional
Artist acrylic paints, such as those made by Folk Art or Delta Ceramcoat
Folk Art Parchment or Flesh for bust and limbs
Black for eyes
White for eyes
Delta Ceramcoat Rouge for cheeks and mouth
Pigma Micron 01 ink pens
Brown for eyes
Red for mouth
1 liner paintbrush
1 scruffy brush for applying rosy cheeks
1 stylus or other finely pointed utensil
1 turning tool, hemostat (surgical scissors for removing stitches) preferred
1 stuffing tool
1 sanding disc or sheet of 600-grit sandpaper
1 sheet black graphite paper
1 sheet tracing paper
Masking or transparent tape
All-purpose glue for applying the hair
Clear nail polish, optional

CORRECTION

In "Making the Body," be sure to stuff the hands as well as the arms up to the elbows.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read all instructions before beginning.

Making the Body—Trace the body patterns onto a double thickness of muslin. These drawn lines are your sewing lines—do NOT cut on them. Sew on the lines, leaving open where indicated. Trim fabric to about 1/4" beyond seam; turn and stuff. On each arm, stuff only from the wrist to the middle, then stitch across the arm at elbow level to hold the stuffing in place. Do not stuff the upper arm.

Turn under the ends of the openings on all stuffed body pieces; stitch closed. Sew the arms to the body where indicated, using a whipstitch with buttonhole thread. Sew the stuffed thigh and calf pieces together. Position the thighs 1/4" in on either side of the doll bottom; whipstitch with buttonhole thread.

Sculpting the Nose—Cut out the U shape on the pattern. Draw the area for the nose onto the doll's stuffed head with a pencil. With unknotted buttonhole thread, begin on the lower right side of the nose area and sew a stitch under to the other side, leaving about an inch of thread trailing from where you began. Return to the same spot, still working under and finally back to the other side, always under. With the thread now secure, clip the unknotted piece. Continue with the under-sewing, back and forth, all the way to the top of the nose, gently pulling to sculpt a little protruding nose. To finish without a knot, stick the needle down and back to the beginning (beneath the nose) and clip it where it comes out.

Painting the Doll—Draw a line where indicated on the torso. Paint bust and head from there up with parchment or flesh-toned paint. Paint the lower parts of the arms and the lower parts of the legs. When all are dry, use the sanding disc to smooth them. Apply a second coat and sand again when dry to achieve a smooth surface.

Drawing the Face—Trace the face pattern onto tracing paper, cut it out (including the little nose area), and place it on the doll. Tape the face pattern to the top of the head in two places so it won't slide around. Slip the piece of black graphite paper, graphite side down, under the pattern and carefully

trace around the eyes, irises, eyebrows, and mouth with a stylus or other sharp point. Do not trace the eyelashes (it will get too messy with so much graphite). Remove the pattern and graphite paper.

Retrace the lines with the brown Pigma pen. Using the liner brush, paint the white area of the eyes. Paint the irises solid black; use two coats. When dry, place a tiny white dot where indicated on the pattern for the shine. Use the brown pen to add the eyebrow and eyelash markings. Apply a tiny dollop of clear nail polish to the black irises to give them the glass-eye look of an early doll.

Dip the scruffy little brush into some of the Rouge paint, then wipe it off with back-and-forth strokes on a piece of paper towel until there is almost no paint left. Apply to the cheeks for a soft, rosy look, leaving no line of demarcation. Layer it until the color is as deep as you like.

Fill in the mouth using Rouge paint and the liner brush. If you are uncomfortable painting so small an area, use the Pigma red pen.

Ears are optional, but if you want them, use the brown Pigma pen to draw them so that the top of the ear begins at the level of the eyebrow. See the example on the face pattern of a few squiggly lines for the ears.

Attaching the Hair—It takes only a small amount of wool roving, stretched delicately across the very top of the head and down to the ears, to create the doll's hair. Attach it by spreading the glue onto the head and patting on the hair.

Making the Gown—Cut out the pieces as indicated on the pattern. With right sides together, sew the shoulder seams using a 1/4" seam allowance. Press the seams open. Fold the sleeve lengthwise to find the center, then pin the center point to the center of the shoulder seam, right sides together. Pin the very edges of the sleeve piece to the very edges of the dress's armhole, using a pin to pleat the excess fabric on each side of the center. Sew and turn, then hem the sleeve edge.

With right sides together, stitch the sides of the dress and the sleeves. (The dress now has a back opening.) Press under all of the raw edges, including the neckline and the hem and the sides. Finish with the hemstitch. Cut

six ties, each 6"-7" long, from linen ribbon for the back of the gown. Sew the three sets of ties down the back.

Making the Bonnet—Cut out one piece of gown fabric, 3" x 6¹/₄". Fold the 3" edges to meet, then stitch together as indicated on the pattern. Turn; press under all raw edges. Sew with a running stitch. Cut two 8" ties from linen ribbon and sew them to the bonnet.

To hold the bonnet snugly on the doll, tie the two ties into a bow, then slip a piece of thin ribbon through the bonnet's ties at chin level and fasten it at the back with another bow.

You can tie a lace band on each arm near the wrist. Lace was a favored decoration on clothing for babies and dolls alike in the eighteenth century.

Aging—To create the effect of a very old doll, you can age the doll and her clothing, using different techniques for the painted and unpainted surfaces.

Because the doll's head and limbs are painted, use antiquing polish by Folk Art, which is specifically made for this purpose. Apply sparingly and wipe off immediately. You can add more coats until you achieve the desired effect.

For the doll's clothing or any unpainted surface, tea-dyeing works well. Mix instant iced tea to a strong consistency. For light aging, brush it on the fabric. For heavy aging, soak the fabric in the tea mixture until you have the look you want. ★

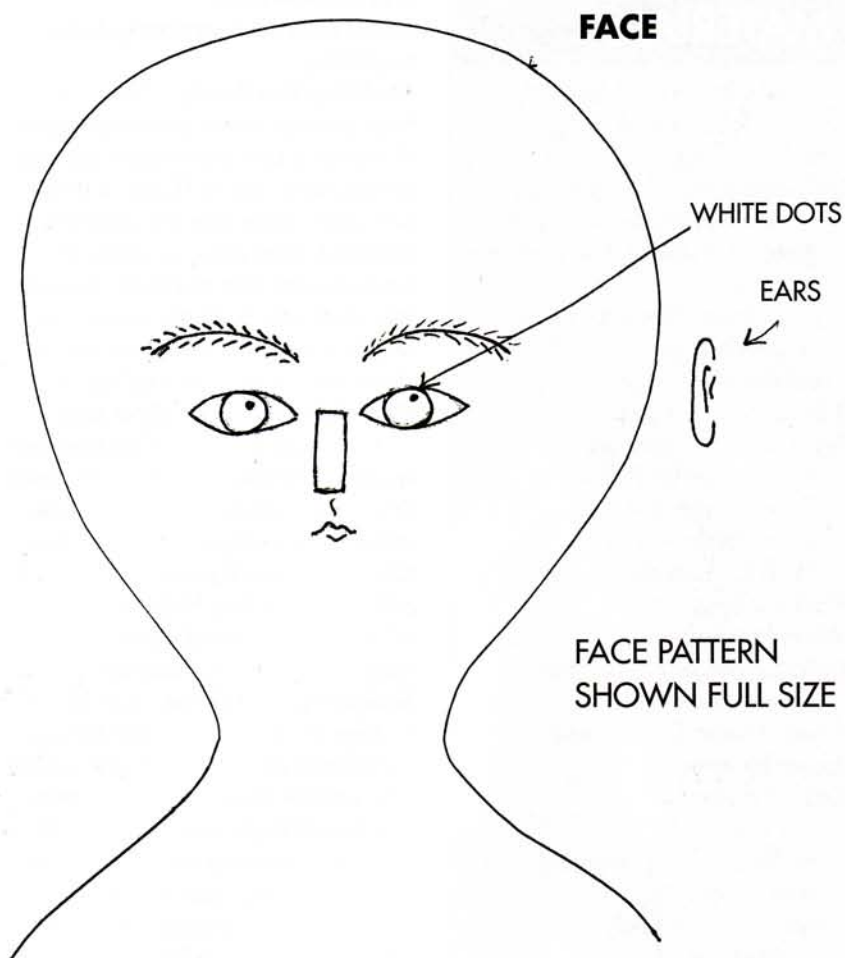
Christine LeFever, maker of dolls in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century styles, is listed in the 2004 Directory of Traditional American Crafts®. See her work at www.christinelefever.com.

SOURCES

Most supplies are readily found in sewing and craft stores, such as JoAnn Fabric & Crafts.

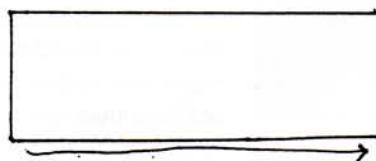
Wool roving for the doll's hair, turning tools, stuffing forks, and numerous other supplies for sewers and doll makers are available from:

GAIL WILSON DESIGNS
420 Grout Hill Road
South Acworth, NH 03607
603-835-6551
www.gailwilsondesigns.com



BONNET

CUT 1 PIECE 3" X 6¹/₄"



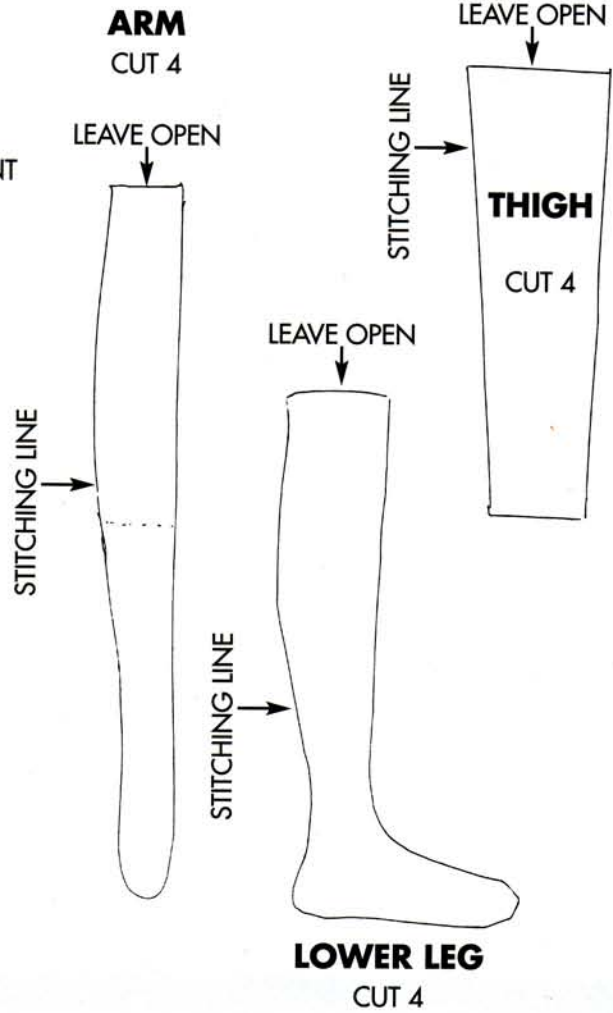
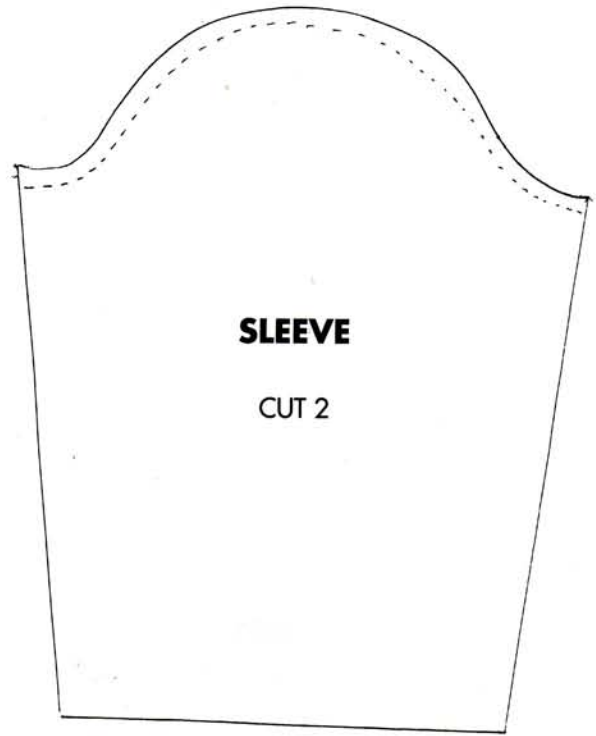
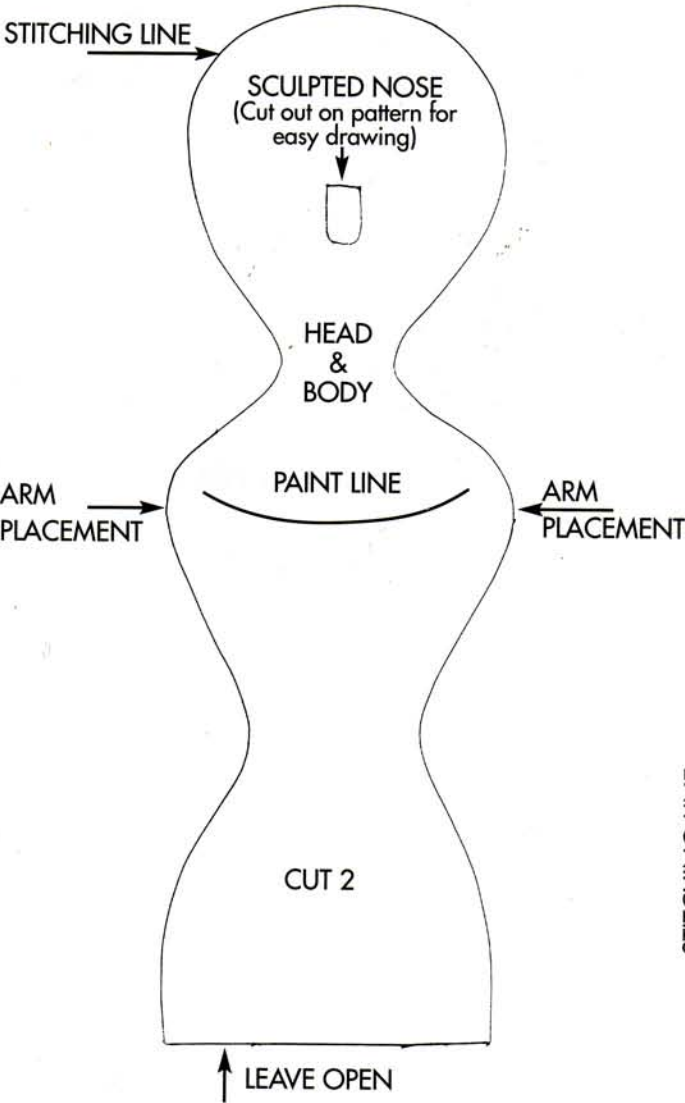
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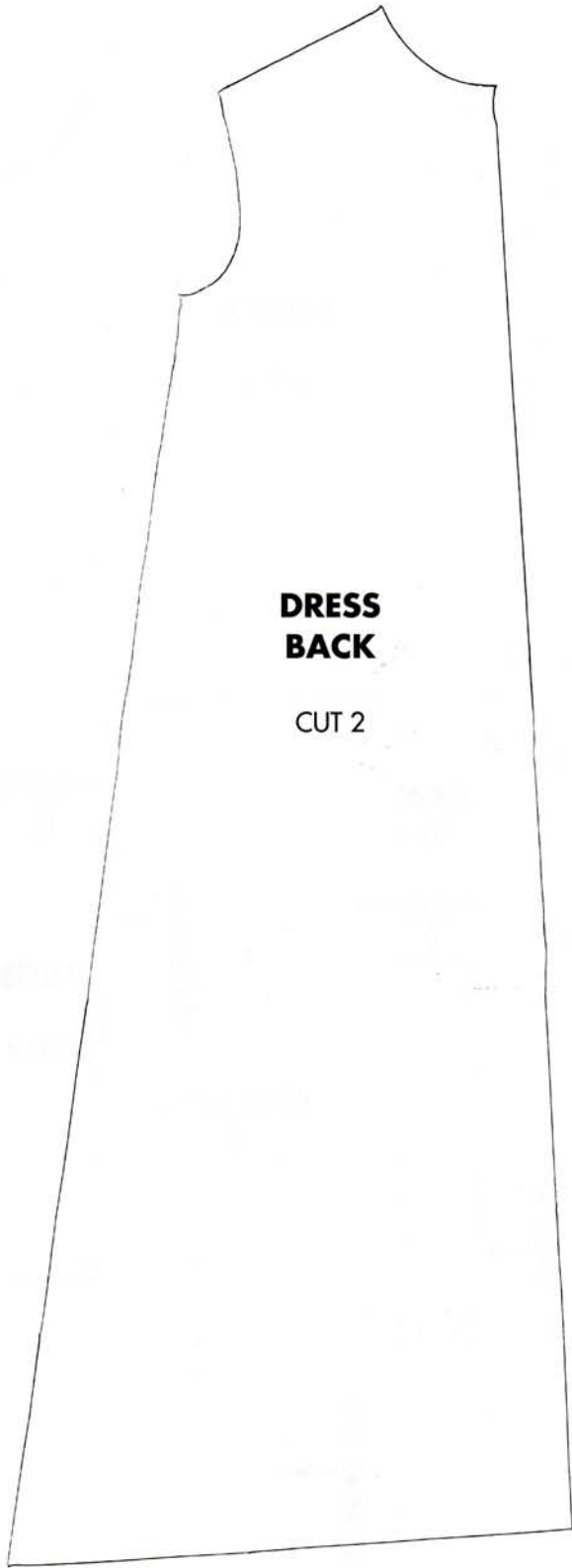
STITCH WHERE INDICATED
ON AN OPEN SIDE

PATTERNS THIS PAGE
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POPPET BODY

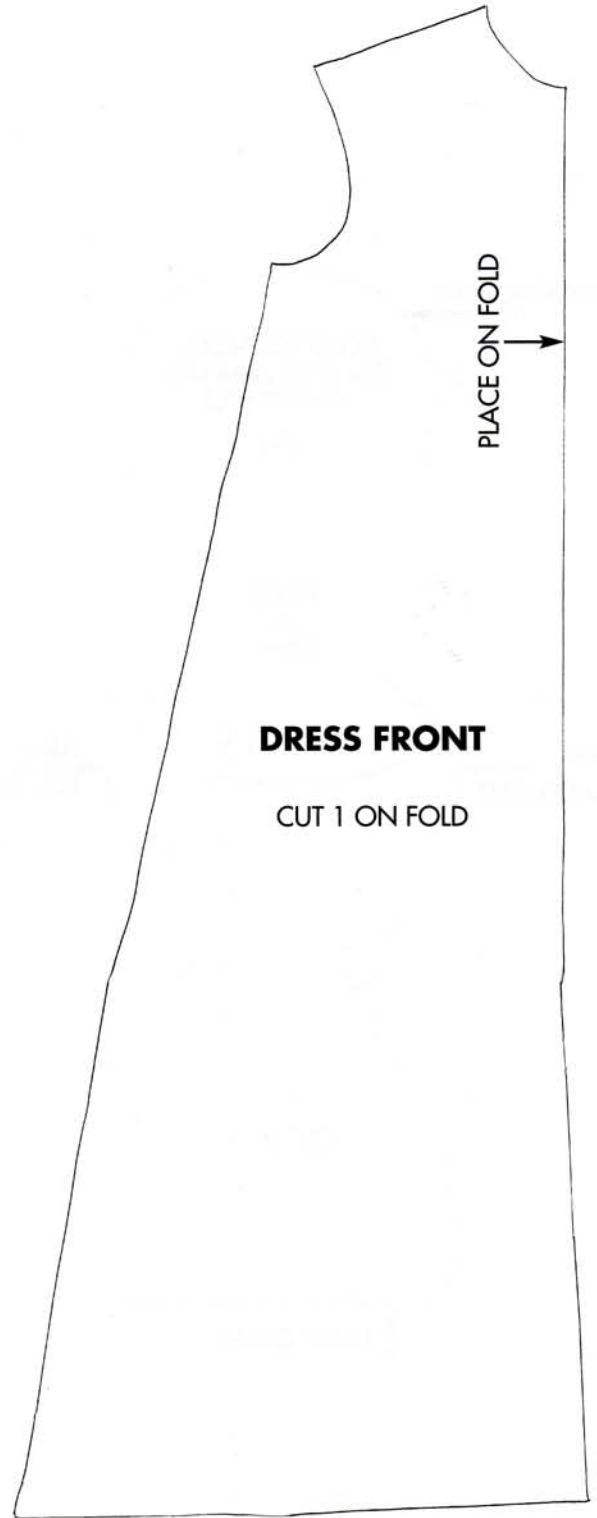


DRESS PATTERNS
SHOWN HALF SIZE



**DRESS
BACK**

CUT 2



PLACE ON FOLD →

DRESS FRONT

CUT 1 ON FOLD