



Playing the Past

“The real things haven’t changed. It is still best to be honest and truthful; to make the most of what we have; to be happy with simple pleasures; and have courage when things go wrong.”

—Laura Ingalls Wilder,
American pioneer and author

Dream up a character: a girl or woman who lived in another time period. Maybe a poodle-skirt-wearing Girl Scout from the 1950s, a Wild West cowgirl, a medieval duchess, or a Japanese princess from long ago? You can be someone who really existed or a historical woman from your imagination. Give yourself a new name and get ready to live history!

Steps

1. Decide who you are
2. Create a costume
3. Experience daily life
4. Have some old-fashioned fun
5. Become your character

Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll know how girls of the past lived, worked, and played.

Questions to Get You Started

- What are your special skills, hobbies, and favorite things?
- What sort of career or life choices did you have? What choices didn't you have?
- How were you expected to behave at the dinner table, a party, and toward men and boys? Did you do so?
- What was in fashion when you were 9 or 10?
- What kind of music did you listen to?
- Who were your best friends and what did you do together?



STEP

1 Decide who you are

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

Pick your time period and do a little research. What did girls do? What did they like? Then use one of the choices to come up with the details of your character's life.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Write her diary. Pretend to be your character and write a week's diary about your daily life.

OR

Write a speech for your character. If she could have gotten up and spoken her mind, what would she have said—and who would she have said it to? Pick a scenario and write her words.

FOR MORE FUN: Perform it for an audience!

OR

Play a game of 20 questions. If your character actually existed, have a partner try to guess who she is or what time period she is from by asking you questions. Then tell her all about the character.

Paper Doll Fashions

Juliette Gordon Low loved to make paper dolls with her sisters and cousins, especially her cousin Caroline. The girls made outfits for the dolls based on styles that were popular in the 1870s and 1880s. They dressed the dolls in day dresses, long fancy dresses for dinners and parties, and even costumes for masked balls. They also made costumes for storybook characters, people they knew, and famous actresses of their day.



STEP 2 Create a costume

Now it's time to work on your look. Create a costume that matches your character's lifestyle and time period. If a specific part of the outfit (such as an extra-long skirt) serves a particular purpose or function, find out what it is.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Do it yourself.** Stitch your own outfit, or make one from a pattern (ask an adult for help if you need it). Or visit a thrift shop to find clothing to decorate.

FOR MORE FUN: Add a hairdo! Style your hair for your time period, too.

OR

- Make two or three accessories.** What kinds of decorations did girls wear in your time period? Pick something to re-create. This could be a hat, necklace of fake jewels, or a lady knight's shield.

OR

- Draw it out.** Sketch and label a typical outfit as if you were a fashion designer from the era.

FOR MORE FUN: Make a simple doll from paper (or use a doll you have) and make the outfit for her to wear.

More to Explore



Pretend you're a Girl Scout from the past. If your character is from the past 100 years, find out how her Girl Scout uniform would have looked—and make your best copy.

By the Book

A great way to learn facts about your character's time period is to read a biography or autobiography on a woman or girl who lived in the era. If you need ideas, ask a librarian for help.



STEP 3 Experience daily life

Immerse yourself in your character's time period. Think about what her lifestyle would have been like, and live it out. This is your chance to spend a day seeing the world through your character's eyes.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

What are your chores/duties? Take one on. You might hand-dip candles, churn butter in a jar, embroider a sampler, or make a doll.

OR 

Food and meals. Research a recipe and make a typical dish a girl from that time period might have prepared for her family.

OR 

Home Sweet Home. Where would you have lived? Create a model of your character's home—you might make a teepee or Mongolian yurt (a kind of tent) or draw and label the parts of a castle.

More to Explore

Find out how your character would have lived if she had had a disability. Share what you learn with your Girl Scout group. How would things be different for her today?



Pets of the Era

Many time periods have signature pets. Ancient Egyptians loved cats, while in Mongolian culture, a strong relationship with horses has been important for centuries.

What kind of companion might your girl have had? You could use this as an opportunity to learn about pets throughout the ages and around the world.



Great Women in History



Cleopatra (69–30 BC) was a queen and the last pharaoh of ancient Egypt.



Elizabeth Blackwell (1821–1910) was the first female physician in the United States.



Juliette Gordon Low (1860–1927) founded the Girl Scouts of the USA.



Joan of Arc (1412–1431) helped the French defeat the English in the Hundred Years War.



Sarah Winnemucca (1841–1891) was the first American Indian woman to publish a book in English.



Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) was the first Mexican artist to have a painting at the famous Louvre museum, in Paris, France.



Harriet Tubman (1821–1913) was an escaped slave who helped more than 70 other slaves make their way to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

Alice Guy-Blaché (1873–1968) was a Frenchwoman and the first female director in the movie industry.





STEP

4 Have some old-fashioned fun

Every girl has a favorite game. Find out what kinds of things girls in your chosen time period did for fun, then try out an activity yourself.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Make music. Find out what sounds were popular in your day and share them with others. You could look up sheet music and sing or play a song, make an instrument, or even compose something.

OR

Play a game—or two. What kinds of parlor or party games existed? Make a board game or play cards in a style popular for the times. What sorts of outside games were played? Gather your friends and try one.

OR

Create art. What types of art were popular? Sculpt something from clay, do a painting or drawing in a period-appropriate style, or try out a dance from your era.



STEP

5 Become your character

Now, act as your character. Wear your costume and plan to share one thing about your life. You could teach some friends a game you learned, share the food you made with your family, or tell anything else you can dream up to other Girl Scout Juniors or classmates at school.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

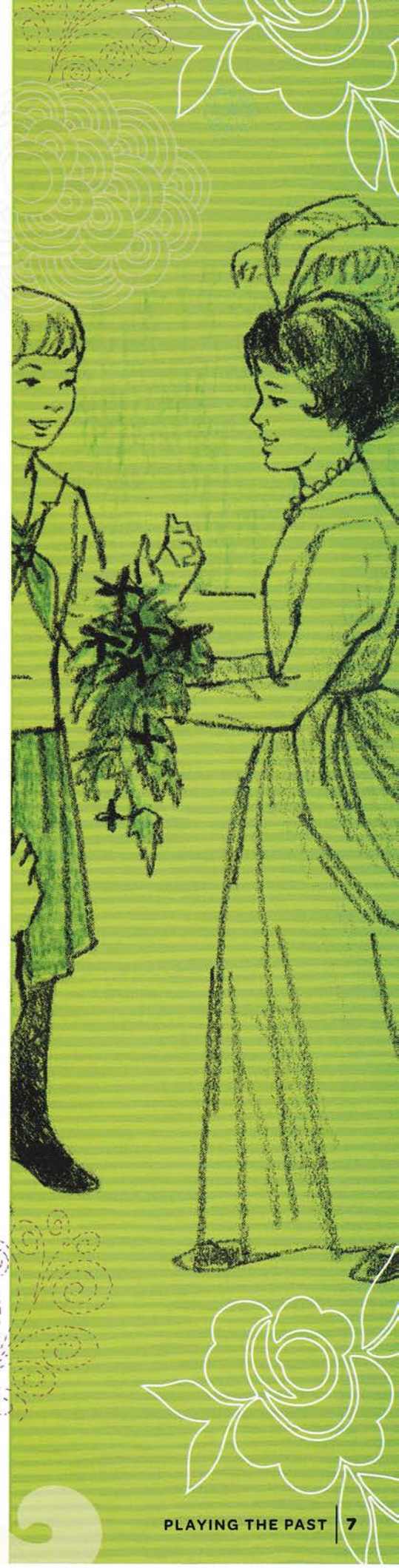
Make your own event. Maybe each girl is a character from *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, and you celebrate Amy's wedding. Or perhaps you can set up a medieval feast, pioneer day at the park, or a big dance typical of the time period. If you're from different eras, make it a living-history jamboree—could you each have a booth to represent your era?

OR

Have a living-history party. Get together with your group and have everyone share their characters. Or be the star yourself, and bring the era to life for friends or family.

OR

Attend a history-oriented event in your town. Local historical museums and libraries sometimes host events that celebrate the past. Many cities have yearly Renaissance fairs, and some places stage reenactments of historical events. See if you can find one in your era, and make this badge a way to get yourself ready to attend.





Add the Badge to Your Journey

For step 1, when you create a biography for the girl you will play, include a stereotype that she might have faced—and her ideas for busting it.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Visiting a Brownie group or a classroom at my school in character to teach them about girls and women of the past
- Holding a performance at a community center to share what I've learned about how girls throughout history lived
- Writing and illustrating a story that tells friends what life was like for girls in the past



I'm inspired to: