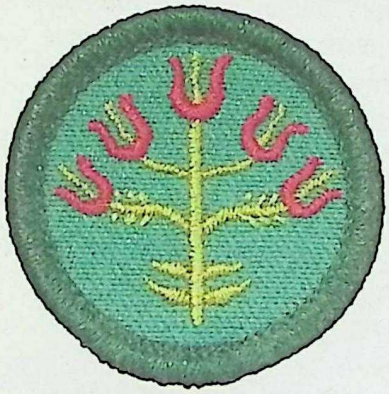
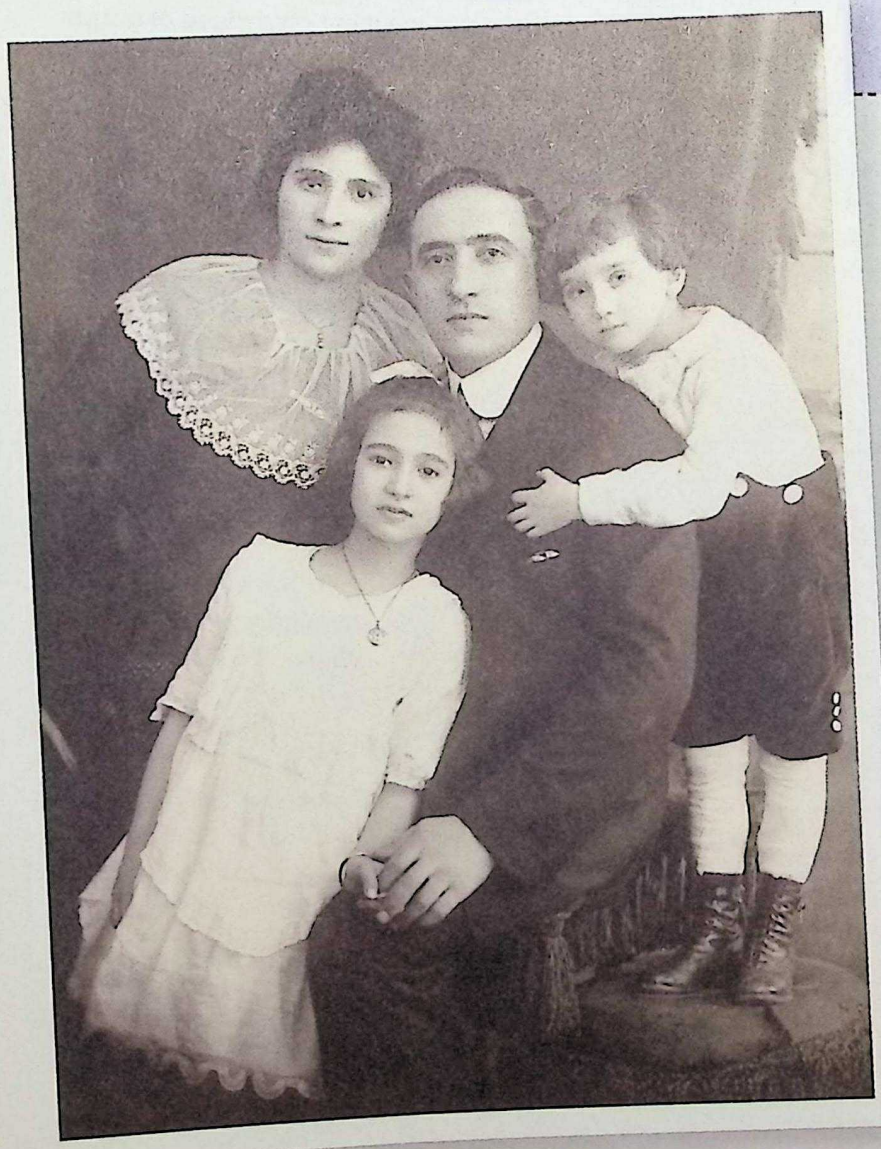
Folk Arts



Folk arts are the arts of everyday people, like you and your friends or family. They include dance, song, stories (folk tales), crafts, and even special foods that reflect the history and tastes of a particular group of people. Add color to your life with folk arts.



1. Family Portrait

Before the days of instant and digital cameras, painters often traveled around, stopping to make pictures of families wherever they were asked. Often, they were asked to include details that were important to the family. Draw or paint a picture of yourself or your family as an artist might have done it before cameras were invented. Include some things that are dear to you and your family, such as family heirlooms (valuable objects handed down from generation to generation), favorite hobbies, toys, books, or collections.

2. A Picture Tells a Thousand Thoughts

Look at some old photographs of your family or other people. Examine the poses, clothes, and facial expressions. Do they seem different from what you see in pictures taken recently? What do the pictures tell you about the people and their lives? Write captions or a short story about the pictures.

3. Tell a Story

Practice the art of storytelling. If possible, get together with a local storyteller or children's librarian and ask how she/he keeps an audience interested. Find a fairy tale, myth, or legend that you like. Practice telling it out loud, as you would if you were rehearsing a part in a play. Retell it, or part of it, to a group, perhaps at a special ceremony or event.

4. Fancy Feet

Learn a folk dance. Teach a friend or troop members some folk steps and dances.

5. Traditional Art

Learn an art form that was traditional for girls 75 years or more ago. Complete a small project using that art form.

6. What Toys Tell Us

Find pictures of old children's toys or games, or visit a museum, historical house, or antique store. Talk to grandparents or older relatives who grew up in the pre-electronic age about the toys they played with as youngsters.

7. Folk Arts Around the Globe

Look for examples and pictures of traditional folk arts from at least three countries. Do a folk art project either by following written instructions or by doing what someone teaches you.

8. A Feast of Folk Crafts

Work on a large folk art project that requires lots of helping hands, such as a taffy pull, a kite flying festival, or a troop quilt.

9. Fresh and Original

Create a new folk art product, using handmade or store-bought items. Some examples are adding enamel paint designs to old pottery or dishes, making scented candles or soaps, making paper, or adding decorative items (beads, buttons, ribbons, etc.) to clothing. As with any project, use non-toxic materials that meet safety standards.

10. Time Travel

Visit a place near you where antiques, historical crafts, or collections of folk art are on display. You might visit museums, antique stores, or places designated as historic landmarks. Find out how items on display were used in the past.

